1843.

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Etched by G. F. Storm

View of the Mineria, in the City of Mexico.

LIFE IN MEXICO

DURING A

RESIDENCE OF TWO YEARS

IN

THAT COUNTRY.

By Mme. C——— De La B———.

=00

[Frances Erskine Calderón de la Barca]

Thou art beautiful,
Queen of the valley! thou art beautiful!
Thy walls, like silver, sparkle to the sun,
Melodious wave thy groves. . . . .

Southey's Madoc.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

BOSTON:
CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.
1843.

Ga/66/1616

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PREFACE.

The present work is the result of observations made during a two years' residence in Mexico, by a lady, whose position there, made her intimately acquainted with its society, and opened to her the best sources of information in regard to whatever could interest an enlightened foreigner. It consists of letters written to the members of her own family, and *really*, not intended originally, — however incredible the assertion, — for publication. Feeling a regret that such rich stores of instruction and amusement, from which I have so much profited, myself, should be reserved for the eyes of a few friends only, I strongly recommended that they should be given to the world. This is now done,

with a few such alterations and omissions as were necessary in a private correspondence; and although the work would derive more credit from the author's own name, than from anything which I can say, yet as she declines prefixing it, I feel much pleasure in making this statement by way of introduction to the public.

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT.

BOSTON, December 20, 1842.

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LETTERS FROM MEXICO.

LETTER THE FIRST.

Departure of the "Norma" — Last look of New York Bay — Fellow-passengers — Contrary Winds — Deceitful Appearances — Sun-set in Southern Latitudes — Seas passed over by Columbus — Varied Occupations on Ship-board — Berry Islands — Bahama Banks — Evening in a Tropical Sea — L. E. L. — Pan of Matanzas — Morro Castle — Bay of Havana — Arrival — Handsome House in Havana — Sights and Sounds.

PACKET SHIP NORMA, Oct. 27th, 1839.

THIS morning, at 10 o'clock, we stepped on board the steamboat Hercules, destined to convey us to our packet with its musical name. The day was foggy and gloomy, as if refusing to be comforted, even by an occasional smile from the sun. All prognosticated that the Norma would not sail to-day, but "where there's a will," &c. Several of our friends accompanied us to the wharf; the Russian Minister, the Minister of Buenos Ayres, Mr. ——, who tried hard to look sentimental, and even brought tears into his eyes by some curious process; Judge ——,

Mr. ——, and others, from whom we were truly sorry to part.

The Norma was anchored in one of the most beautiful points of the bay, and the steamboat towed us five miles, until we had passed the Narrows. The wind was contrary, but the day began to clear up, and the sun to scatter the watery clouds.

Still there is nothing so sad as a retreating view. It is as if time were visibly in motion; and as here we had to part from ——, we could only distinguish as through a misty veil, the beauties of the bay; the shores covered to the water's edge with trees rich in their autumnal coloring; the white houses on Staten Island — the whole gradually growing fainter, till like a dream, they faded away.

The pilot has left us, breaking our last link with the land. We still see the mountains of Neversink, and the lighthouse of Sandy Hook. The sun is setting, and in a few minutes, we must take our leave, probably for years, of places long familiar to us.

Our fellow-passengers do not appear very remarkable. There is Madame A——, returning from being prima donna in Mexico, in a packet called after the opera in which she was there a favorite, with her husband Señor V—— and her child. There is M. B—— with moustaches like a bird's nest; a pretty widow in deep affliction, at least in deep mourning; a maiden lady going out as a governess, and every variety of Spaniard and Havanero. So now we are alone, C——n and I, and my French femme-de-chambre, with her air of Dowager Duchess, and moreover sea-sick.

28*th.* — When I said I liked a sea life, I did not mean to be understood as liking a merchant ship, with an airless cabin, and with every variety of disagreeable odor. As a French woman on board, with the air of an afflicted porpoise, and with more truth than elegance, expresses it: "Tout devient puant, même l'eau-de-cologne."

The wind is still contrary, and the Norma, beating up and down, makes but little way. We have gone seventy-four miles, and of these advanced but forty. Every one being sick to-day, the deck is nearly deserted. The most interesting object I have discovered on board, is a pretty little deaf and dumb girl, very lively and with an intelligent face, who has been teaching me to speak on my fingers. The infant heir of the house of —— has shown his good taste by passing the day in squalling. M. B——, pale, dirty and much resembling a brigand out of employ, has traversed the deck with uneasy footsteps and a cigar appearing from out his moustaches, like a light in a tangled forest, or a jack-o-lantern in a marshy thicket. A fat Spaniard has been discoursing upon the glories of olla podrida. *Au reste*, we are slowly pursuing our way, and at this rate might reach Cuba in three months.

And the stars are shining, quiet and silvery. All without is soft and beautiful, and no doubt the Norma herself looks all in unison with the scene, balancing herself like a lazy swan, white and graciously. So it is without, and within, there is miserable sea-sickness, bilge-water, and all the unavoidable disagreeables of a small packet.

31*st.* — Three days have passed without anything worthy of notice having occurred, except that we already feel the difference of temperature. The passengers are still enduring sea-sickness in all its phases.

This morning opened with an angry dispute between two of the gentlemen, on the subject of the Cuban lotteries, and they ended by applying to each other epithets which, however much they might be deserved, were certainly rather strong; but by dinner time, they were amicably engaged in concocting together an enormous tureen of *gaspachos*, a sort of salad, composed of bread, oil, vinegar, sliced onion and garlic — and the fattest one declares that in warm weather, a dish of *gaspachos*, with plenty of garlic in it, makes him feel as fresh as a rose. He must indeed be a perfect bouquet.

The opening of morning is dramatic in our narrow cabin. About twenty voices in Spanish, German, Italian and broken English, strike up by degrees. From a neighboring state room, *Nid d'oiseau* puts forth his head. "Stooar! a toomlar! here is no vater!" "Comin sir, comin." "*Caramba!* Stooard!" "Comin sir, comin!" "Stuart? vasser und toel!" "Here sir!" "Amigo! how is the wind?" (This is the waking up of el Señor Ministro, putting his head half suffocated out of his berth.) "Oh steward! steward!" "Yes, miss." "Come here, and look at *this!*" "I 'll fix it, miss," — &c.

1*st November.* — A fair wind after a stifling night, and strong hopes of seeing the Bahama Banks on Sunday. Most people are now gradually ascending from

the lower regions, and dragging themselves on deck with pale and dejected countenances. Madame A. has such a sweet-toned voice in speaking, especially in the accents of her *bella Italia*, that it is refreshing to listen to her. I have passed all day in reading after a desultory fashion, "Les enfans d'Edouard," by Casimir Delavigne, Washington Irving, d'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature, &c.; and it is rather singular that while there is a very tolerable supply of English and French books here, I see but one or two odd volumes in Spanish, although these packets are constantly filled with people of that nation, going and coming. Is it that they do not care for reading, or that less attention is paid to them, than to the French or American passengers? One would think Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon or Moratin, better worth buying than many commonplace novels which I find here.

3*d.* — Yesterday, the wind blew soft as on a summer morning. A land bird flew into the ship. To-day the wind has veered round, but the weather continues charming. The sea is covered with multitudes of small flying-fish. An infantile water-spout appeared, and died in its birth. Mr. ——, the Consul, has been giving me an account of the agreeable society in the Sandwich Islands! A magnificent sunset, the sight of which compensates for all the inconveniences of the voyage. The sky was covered with black clouds lined with silver, and surrounded by every variety of color; deep blue, fleecy, rose, violet and orange. The heavens are now thickly studded with stars, numbers shooting across the

blue expanse like messengers of light, glancing and disappearing as if extinguished.

It is well to read the History of Columbus at sea, but especially in these waters, where he wandered in suspense, high-wrought expectation and firm faith; and to watch the signs which the noble mariner observed in these latitudes; the soft serenity of the breezes, the clear blue of the heavens, the brilliancy and number of the stars, the sea-weeds of the gulf, which always drift in the direction of the wind, the little land-birds that come like harbingers of good tidings, the frequency of the shooting stars, and the multitude of flying-fish.

As the shades of evening close around, and the tropical sky glitters with the light of innumerable stars, imagination transports us back to that century which stands out in bold relief amidst other ages rolling by comparatively undistinguished, and we see as in a vision the Discoverer of a World, standing on the deck of his caravel, as it bounded over the unknown and mysterious waste of waters, his vigilant eyes fixed on the west, like a Persian intently watching the rising of his god; though his star was to arise from whence the day-god sets. We see him bending his gaze on the first dark line that separated the watery sea from the blue of the heavens, striving to penetrate the gloom of night, yet waiting with patient faith until the dawn of day should bring the long-wished for shores in sight.

6th.—For three days, three very long and uncomfortable days, the wind, with surprising constancy, has continued to blow dead a-head. In ancient

days, what altars might have smoked to Æolus! Now, except in the increased puffing of consolatory cigar-smoke, no propitiatory offerings are made to unseen powers. There are indeed many mourning signs amongst the passengers. Every one has tied up his head in an angry-looking silken bandana drawn over his nose with a dogged air. Beards are unshaven, a black stubble covering the lemon-colored countenance, which occasionally bears a look of sulky defiance, as if its owner were like Juliet, "past hope, past cure, past help."

7th. — This morning the monotony of fine weather was relieved by a hearty squall, accompanied by torrents of rain, much thunder and forked lightning. The ship reeled to and fro like a drunken man, and the passengers, as usual in such cases, performed various involuntary evolutions, cutting right angles, sliding, spinning round, and rolling over, as if Oberon's magic horn were playing an occasional blast amidst the roaring winds; whilst the stewards alone, like Horace's good man, walked serene amidst the wreck of crockery and the fall of plates. Driven from our strong hold on deck, indiscriminately crammed in below, like figs in a drum; "weltering," as Carlyle has it, "like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers," the cabin windows all shut in, we tried to take it coolly, in spite of the suffocating heat.

There is a child on board who is certainly possessed; not by a witty, malicious demon, a diable boiteux, but by a teasing, stupid, wicked imp, which inspires him with the desire of tormenting everything human that comes within his reach. Should he escape

being thrown overboard, it will shew a wonderful degree of forbearance on the part of the passengers.

8th. — The weather is perfect, but the wind inexorable; and the passengers, with their heads tied up, look more gloomy than ever. Some sit dejected in corners; and some quarrel with their neighbors, thus finding a safety-valve by which their wrath may escape.

9th. — There is no change in the wind, yet the gentlemen have all brightened up, taken off their head-kerchiefs and shaved, as if ashamed of their six days' impatience, and making up their minds to a sea life. This morning we saw land; a long, low ridge of hills on the Island of Eleuthera, where they make salt, and where there are many negroes. Neither salt nor negroes visible to the naked eye; nothing but the gray outline of the hills, melting into the sea and sky; and having tacked about all day, we found ourselves in the evening precisely opposite to this same island. There are Job's comforters on board, who assure us that they have been thirty-six days between New York and la "joya mas preciosa de la corona de España." [1]

For my part, I feel no impatience, having rather a dislike to changing my position when tolerable, and the air is so fresh and laden with balm, that it seems to blow over some paradise of sweets, some land of fragrant spices. The sea also is a mirror, and I have read Marryatt's Pirate for the first time.

Thus then we stand at eight o'clock, P. M.; wind

[1] The most precious jewel in the Spanish crown, the name given to Cuba.

a-head, and little of it; performing a zig-zag march between Eleuthera and Abaco. On deck, the pretty widow lies in an easy chair, surrounded by her countrymen, who discourse about sugar, molasses, chocolate, and other local topics, together with the relative merits of Cuba as compared with the rest of the known world. Madame A—— is studying her part of Elizabetta in the opera of Roberto Devereux, which she is to bring out in Havana, but the creaking of the Norma is sadly at variance with harmony. A pale German youth, in dressing-gown and slippers, is studying Schiller. An ingenious youngster is carefully conning a well-thumbed note, which looks like a milliner's girl's last billetdoux. The little *possédé* is burning brown paper within an inch of the curtains of a state-room, while the steward is dragging it from him. Others are gradually dropping into their berths, like ripe nuts from a tree. Thus are we all pursuing our vocations.

9*th.* — Wind dead a-head! I console myself with Cinq-Mars and Jacob Faithful. But the weather is lovely. A young moon in her first quarter, like a queen in her minority, glitters like a crescent on the brow of night.

Towards evening the long wished for lighthouse of Abaco (built by the English) shewed her charitable and revolving radiance. But our ship, Penelope-like, undoes by night what she has performed by day, and her course is backward and crabbish. A delicious smell of violets is blowing from the land.

10*th.* — A fair wind. The good tidings communicated by the A——, *toute rayonnante de joie.* A

fair wind, and a bright blue sea, cool and refreshing breezes, the waves sparkling, and the ship going gallantly over the waters. So far, our voyage may have been tedious, but the most determined landsman must allow that the weather has been charming.

Sunday at sea; and though no bells are tolling, and no hymns are chanted, the blue sky above and the blue ocean beneath us, form one vast temple, where, since the foundations of the earth and sea were laid, *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.*

This morning we neared the Berry Islands, unproductive and rocky, as the geography-books would say. One of these islands belongs to a colored man, who bought it for fifty dollars — a cheaply-purchased sovereignty. He, his wife and children, with their *negro slaves!* live there, and cultivate vegetables to sell at New York, or at the different ships which pass that way. Had the wind been favorable, they would probably have sent us out a boat with fresh vegetables, fish, and fruit, which would have been very acceptable. We saw, not far from the shore, the wreck of a two-masted vessel; a sad sight to those who pass over the same waters to see

> "A brave vessel,
> Who had, no doubt, some noble creatures in her,
> Dashed all to pieces!"

Who had, at least, some of God's creatures in her. Anything but that! I am like Gonzalo, and "would fain die a dry death."

We are now on the Bahama Banks, the water

very clear and blue, with a creamy froth, looking as if it flowed over pearls and turquoises. An English schooner man-of-war (a *boy*-of-war in size) made all sail towards us, doubtless hoping we were a slaver; but, on putting us to the test of his spy-glass, the captain, we presume, perceived that the general tinge of countenance was lemon rather than negro, and so abandoned his pursuit.

This evening on the Banks. It would be difficult to imagine a more placid and lovely scene. Everything perfectly calm, all sail set, and the heavens becoming gradually sprinkled with silver stars. The sky blue, and without a cloud, except where the sun has just set, the last crimson point sinking in the calm sea and leaving a long retinue of rainbow-colored clouds, deep crimson tinged with bright silver, and melting away into gray, pale vapor.

On goes the vessel, stately and swanlike; the water of the same turquoise blue, covered with a light pearly froth, and so clear that we see the large sponges at the bottom. Every minute they heave the lead. "By the mark three." "By the mark three, less a quarter." "By the mark twain and a half," (fifteen feet, the vessel drawing thirteen,) two feet between us and the bottom. The sailor sings it out like the first line of a hymn in short metre, doled out by the parish clerk. I wish Madame A—— were singing it instead of he. "By the mark three, less a quarter." To this tune, the only sound breaking the stillness of the night, I dropped to sleep. The captain passed the night anxiously, now

looking out for lights on the Banks, now at the helm, or himself sounding the lead;

> "For some must watch whilst others sleep;
> Thus wags the world away."

11*th.* — Beautiful morning, and fair wind. About eight we left the Banks. Just then we observed, that the sailor who sounded, having sung out five, then six, then in a few minutes seven, suddenly found no bottom, as if we had fallen off all at once from the brink of the Bank into an abyss.

A fellow-captain, and passenger of our captain's, told me this morning, that he spoke the ship which carried out Governor and Mrs. McLean to Cape-Coast Castle — the unfortunate L. E. L. It does not seem to me at all astonishing, that the remedies, which she took in England without injury, should have proved fatal to her in that wretched climate.

We have been accompanied all the morning by a fine large ship, going full sail, the Orleans, Captain Sears, bound for New Orleans. . . . . A long semi-circular line of black rocks in sight; some of a round form, one of which is called the Death's Head; another of the shape of a turtle, and some two or three miles long. At the extremity of one of these, the English are building a light-house.

12*th.* — We are opposite the Pan of Matanzas, about sixty miles from Havana. Impatience becomes general, but the breeze rocks us up and down, and we gain little. This day, like all last days on board, has been remarkably tedious, though the country gradually becomes more interesting. There

is a universal brushing-up amongst the passengers; some shaving, some with their heads plunged into tubs of cold water. So may have appeared Noah's ark, when the dove did not return, and the passengers prepared for terra firma, after a forty days' voyage. Our Mount Ararat was the Morro Castle which, dark and frowning, presented itself to our eyes, at six o'clock, P. M.

Nothing can be more striking than the first appearance of this fortress, starting up from the solid rock, with its towers and battlements, while here, to remind us of our latitude, we see a few feathery cocoas growing amidst the herbage that covers the banks near the castle. By its side, covering a considerable extent of ground, is the fortress called the *Cabaña*, painted rose-color, with the angles of its bastions white.

But there is too much to look at now. I must finish my letter in Havana.

HAVANA, 13th November.

Last evening, as we entered the beautiful bay, everything struck us as strange and picturesque. The soldiers of the garrison, the prison built by General Tacon, the irregular houses with their fronts painted red or pale blue, and with the cool but uninhabited look produced by the absence of glass windows; the merchant ships and large men-of-war; vessels from every port in the commercial world, the little boats gliding amongst them with their snow-white sails, the negroes on the wharf — nothing European. The heat was great, that of a July day, without any freshness in the air.

As we approached the wharf, the noise and bustle increased. The passengers all crowded upon deck, and we had scarcely anchored, when various little boats were seen making for the Norma. First boat brought an officer with the salutations of the Captain-General to his Excellency, with every polite offer of service; second boat brought the Administrador of the Yntendente, (the Count de Villa Nueva) with the same civilities; the third, the master of the house where we now are, and whence I indite these facts; the fourth, the Italian Opera, which rushed simultaneously into the arms of the A——i; the fifth, prosaic custom-house officers; the sixth, a Havana Count and Marquis; the seventh, the family of General M——o. Finally, we were hoisted over the ship's side in a chair, into the government boat, and rowed to the shore. As it was rather dark when we arrived, and we were driven to our destination in a volante, we did not see much of the city. We could but observe that the streets were narrow, the houses irregular, most people black, and the volante, an amusing-looking vehicle, looking behind like a black insect with high shoulders, and with a little black postilion on a horse or mule, with an enormous pair of boots and a fancy uniform.

The house, in which, by the hospitality of the H——a family we are installed, has from its windows, which front the bay, the most varied and interesting view imaginable. As it is the first house, Spanish fashion, which I have entered, I must describe it to you before I sleep. The house forms a great square, and you enter the court, round which

are the offices, the rooms for the negroes, coal-house, bath-room, &c., and in the middle of which stand the volantes. Proceed up stairs, and enter a large gallery which runs all round the house. Pass into the *Sala*, a large cool apartment, with marble floor and tables, and chaises-longues with elastic cushions, chairs and arm-chairs of cane. A drapery of white muslin and blue silk divides this from a second and smaller drawing-room, now serving as my dressing-room, and beautifully fitted up, with gothic toilette-table, inlaid mahogany bureau, marble centre and side-tables, fine mirrors, cane sofas and chairs, green and gold paper. A drapery of white muslin and rose-colored silk divides this from a bedroom, also fitted up with all manner of elegancies. French beds with blue silk coverlids and clear musquito curtains, and fine lace. A drapery divides this on one side from the gallery; and this room opens into others which run all round the house. The floors are marble or stucco — the roofs beams of pale blue wood placed transversely, and the whole has an air of agreeable coolness. Everything is handsome without being gaudy, and admirably adapted for the climate. The sleeping apartments have no windows, and are dark and cool, while the drawing-rooms have large windows down to the floor, with green shutters, kept closed till the evening.

The mosquitoes have now commenced their evening song, a signal that it is time to put out the lights. The moon is shining on the bay, and a faint sound of military music is heard in the distance, while the sea moans with a sad but not unpleasing monotony. To all these sounds, I retire to rest.

LETTER THE SECOND.

Havana aristocracy — Lucia de Lammermoor — La Rossi and Montresor — Brig of war — Countess de V——a — Dinner at H——a's — Southerly winds — View from the balcony — *Quinta* of Count V——a — San Cristobal — Mass at San Felipe — Erard Harp — Dinner at General M——o's — A Dessert at Havana — Queen of Spain's birthday — Dinner at the Yntendencia — La Pantanelli — Theatre of Tacon — Railroad — Cure by lightning — Shops — Ball at the Countess F——a's — Last visit — Souvenirs.

15*th.* — We expected hospitality and a good reception, but certainly all our expectations have been surpassed, and the last few days have been spent in such a round of festivity, that not a moment has been left for writing. At home we have held a levee to all that is most distinguished in Havana. Counts, Marquesses and Generals with stars and crosses, have poured in and poured out ever since our arrival. I do not pretend to form any judgment of Havana. We have seen it too much *en beau.*

Last evening we found time to go to the theatre. The opera was Lucia de Lammermoor. The prima donna la Rossi has a voice of much sweetness, sings correctly and with taste, is graceful in her movements, but sadly deficient in strength. Still she suits the character represented, and comes exactly up to my idea of poor Lucy, devoted and broken-hearted,

physically and morally weak. Though the story is altered, and the interest weakened, how graceful the music is! how lovely and full of melody! The orchestra is good, and composed of blacks and whites, like the notes of a piano, mingled in harmonious confusion.

The theatre is remarkably pretty and airy, and the pit struck us as being particularly clean and respectable. All the seats are red leather arm-chairs, and all occupied by well-dressed people.

At the end of the first act, we went round to the Countess F——a's box, to return a visit which she had made me in the morning. We found her extremely agreeable and full of intelligence, also with a very decided air of fashion. She was dressed in fawn-colored satin, with large pearls. At the end of the second act, Lucia was taken ill, her last Aria missed out, and her monument driven on the stage without further ceremony. Montresor, the Ravenswood of the piece, came in, sung and stabbed himself with immense enthusiasm. It is a pity that his voice is deserting him, while his taste and feeling remain. The house has altogether a French look. The boxes are private, that is, the property of individuals, but are not shut in, which, in this climate, would be suffocating. We passed out through a long file of soldiers. The sudden transition from Yankee land to this military Spanish negro land, is *dreamy*.

The General de la Marina, (*Anglice* admiral of the Station,) called some days ago, and informed us that there is a brig of war destined to convey us to Vera Cruz.

Amongst the ladies who have called on me, I find none more charming than the Countess de V——a. Her voice is agreeable, her manners cordial and easy, her expression beautiful from goodness, with animated eyes and fine teeth, her dress quiet and rich. She is universally beloved here. I receive from her, nearly every morning, a bouquet of the loveliest flowers from her quinta — roses, carnations, heliotrope, &c. The dinner at H——a's to-day was a perfect feast. I sat between the Count de F——a and the Count de S—— V——, a millionaire. Everything was served in French white and gold porcelain, which looks particularly cool and pretty in this climate. The Count de P——r was there and his brother; the latter a gentlemanly and intelligent man, with a great taste for music, and whose daughter is a first rate singer, and a charming person. After dinner we rose, according to custom, and went into an adjoining room, while they arranged the dessert, consisting of every imaginable and unimaginable sweetmeat, with fruits, ices, &c. The fruits I have not yet learnt to like. They are certainly wonderful and delicious productions of nature; but to eat eggs and custards and butter off the trees seems unnatural.

The heat to-day is terrible, with a suffocating south wind blowing, and were the houses not built as they are, would be unbearable. The dinner is served in the gallery, which is spacious and cool.

After dinner, Señor Don P——o H——a rose, and addressing C——n, pronounced a poetical impromptu, commemorating the late victory of Espartero, and congratulating C——n on his mission to

the Mexican Republic. We then adjourned to the balcony, where the air was delightful, a cool evening breeze having suddenly sprung up. A large ship, full sail, and various barks, passed the Morro. There were negroes with bare legs walking on the wall, carrying parcels, &c.; volantes passing by with their black-eyed occupants in full dress, short sleeves and flowers in their hair; well-dressed, martial-looking Spanish soldiers marching by, and making tolerably free remarks upon the ladies in the volantes. . . . . We had a visit from the Captain-General.

In the evening we went out to see the Countess De V——a, at her pretty quinta, a short way out of town, and walked in the garden by moonlight, amongst flowers and fountains. The little Count is arleady one of the chamberlains to the Queen, and a diamond key has been sent him by Queen Cristina in token of her approbation of his father's services. These country retreats are delightful after the narrow streets and impure air of the city. . . . . We saw there a good engraving of Queen Victoria, with the Duchess of Sutherland and Lady Normanby.

17*th.* — Yesterday we went to see the procession of the patron saint, San Cristobal, from the balconies of the Yntendencia. It is a fine, spacious building, and, together with the Captain-General's palace, stands in the Plaza de Armas, which was crowded with negroes and negresses, all dressed in white, with white muslin and blonde mantillas, framing and showing off their dusky physiognomies.

Two regiments, with excellent bands of music, conducted the procession, composed of monks and

priests. San Cristobal, a large figure with thick gold legs, surrounded by gold angels with gold wings, was carried by to the music of "*Suoni latromba,*" to which were adapted the words of a hymn in praise of Liberty.

We attended mass in the morning in the church of San Felipe, and entered, preceded, according to custom, by a little negro footman carrying a piece of carpet. There were few people in church, but the grouping was picturesque. The black faces of the negresses, with their white mantillas and white satin shoes, the black silk dresses and black lace mantillas of the Havana ladies, with their white faces and black eyes and little liveried negroes standing behind them — the officers, music and long-bearded priests, all were very effective.

Found, on my return, an excellent Erard harp, sent me by the Marquesa de A——s, a pretty woman and female Crœsus.

A splendid entertainment was given us to-day by General M——o. His house is large and cool; the dinner, as usual, in the gallery, and although there were ninety-seven guests, and as many negroes in waiting, the heat was not oppressive. The jewels of the ladies were superb, especially the diamonds of the M—— family; sprays, necklaces, earrings, really beautiful. The Marquesa de A—— wore a set of emeralds the size of small eggs. She had a pretty, graceful-looking daughter with her, with beautiful eyes. Even the men were well sprinkled with diamonds and rubies.

The dessert, from variety and quantity, was a real

curiosity. Immense vases and candelabras of alabaster were placed at different distances on the table, and hundreds of porcelain dishes were filled with sweetmeats and fruits — sweetmeats of every description, from the little meringue, called "mouthful for a queen," to the blancmanger made of supréme de volaille and milk.

After dinner our health was drank, and another poetical address pronounced. The evening concluded with music and the Havana country dances.

20*th.* — Yesterday being the Queen of Spain's birth-day, a dinner was given to us at the Yntendencia. The house in size is a palace, and the apartments innumerable. The dinner very elegant, and the dessert arranged in another room, a curiosity as usual for profusion and variety. Her Majesty's health was proposed by Don B——o H——a, and so well-timed, that all the guns of the forts fired a salute, it being sunset, just as the toast was concluded, which was drank with real enthusiasm and hearty good-will. According to Spanish custom, the aristocracy generally *se tutoient*, and call each other by their christian names; indeed, they are almost all connected by intermarriages. You may guess at an inferior in rank, only by their increased respect towards him.

We stood on the balcony in the evening. The scene was beautiful, the temperature rather warm, yet delicious from the softness of the breeze. The moon rose so bright that she seemed like the sun shining through a silvery veil. Groups of figures were sauntering about in the square, under the trees,

and two bands having stationed themselves with lamps and music, played alternately pieces from Mozart and Bellini. We regretted leaving so delightful a scene for the theatre, where we arrived in time to hear La Pantanelli sing an Aria, dressed in helmet and tunic, and to see La Jota Arragonesa danced by two handsome Spanish girls in good style.

One evening we went to the theatre of Tacon, to the Captain-General's box. It is certainly a splendid house, large, airy and handsome. The play was the "Campanero de San Pablo," which though generally liked, appears to me a complicated and unnatural composition, with one or two interesting scenes. The best actor was he who represented the blind man. The chief actress is an overgrown dame, all fat and dimples, who kept up a constant sobbing and heaving of her chest, yet never getting rid of an eternal smirk upon her face. A bolero, danced afterwards by two Spanish damsels in black and silver, was very refreshing.

23*d.* — Tomorrow we sail in the Jason, should the wind not prove contrary. Visits, dinners, and parties have so occupied our time, that to write has been next to impossible. Of the country we have, from the same reason, seen little, and the people we are only acquainted with in full dress, which is not the way to judge of them truly. One morning, indeed, we dedicated to viewing the works of the Yntendente, the railroad, and the water-filterers. He and the Countess, and a party of friends, accompanied us.

The country through which the railroad passes, is

flat and rather monotonous; nevertheless, the quantity of wild flowers, which appeared for the most part of the convolvulus species, as we glanced past them — the orange-trees, the clumps of palm and cocoa, the plantain with its gigantic leaves, the fresh green coffee-plant, the fields of sugar-cane of a still brighter green, the half-naked negroes, the low wooden huts, and, still more, the scorching sun in the month of November, — all was new to us, and sufficient to remind us of the leagues of ocean we had traversed, though this is but a halt on our voyage.

At the village where the cars stopped, we listened with much amusement to the story of a fat, comfortable-looking individual, who was cured by lightning in the following manner. He was in the last stage of a decline, when, one hot July morning, he was knocked down by a thunderbolt, a ball of fire, which entered his side, ran all through his body, and came out at his arm. At the place where the ball made its exit, a large ulcer was formed, and when it dispersed he found himself in perfect health, in which he has continued ever since! In such cases the "bottled lightning," demanded by Mrs. Nickleby's admirer, might be a valuable remedy.

Of course, I could not leave Havana without devoting one morning to shopping. The shops have most seducing names — Hope, Wonder, Desire, &c. The French modistes seem to be wisely improving their time, by charging respectable prices for their work. The shopkeepers bring their goods out to the volante, it not being the fashion for ladies to enter the shops, though I took the privilege of a for-

eigner to infringe this rule occasionally. Silks and satins very dear — lace and muslin very reasonable, was, upon the whole, the result of my investigation; but as it only lasted two hours, and that my sole purchases of any consequence were an indispensable mantilla, and a pair of earrings, I give my opinion for the present with due diffidence.

I can speak with more decision on the subject of a great ball given us by the Countess F——a, last evening, which was really superb. The whole house was thrown open — there was a splendid supper, quantities of refreshments, and the whole select aristocracy of Havana. Diamonds on all the women, jewels and orders on all the men, magnificent lustres and mirrors, and a capital band of music in the gallery.

The Captain-General was the only individual in a plain dress. He made himself very agreeable, in good French. About one hundred couple stood up in each country dance, but the rooms are so large and so judiciously lighted, that we did not feel at all warm. Waltzes, quadrilles, and these long Spanish dances, succeeded each other. Almost all the girls have fine eyes and beautiful figures, but without color, or much animation. The finest diamonds were those of the Countess F——a, particularly her necklace, which was *undeniable.*

Walking through the rooms after supper, we were amused to see the negroes and negresses helping themselves plentifully to the sweetmeats, uncorking and drinking fresh bottles of Champagne, and devouring everything on the supper-tables, without the slightest concern for the presence either of their master or

mistress; in fact, behaving like a multitude of spoilt children, who are sure of meeting with indulgence, and presume upon it. . . .

Towards morning we were led down stairs to a large suite of rooms, containing a library of several thousand volumes; where coffee, cakes, &c., were prepared in very beautiful Sêvres porcelaine and gold plate. We left the house, at last, to the music of the national hymn of Spain, which struck up as we passed through the gallery.

Should the north wind, the dreaded *Norte* not blow, we sail tomorrow, and have spent the day in receiving farewell visits. We also went to the theatre, where every one predicts we shall not get off to-morrow. The play was "Le Gamin de Paris," translated. After our return, I paid a very late visit to the P —— r family, who live close by us, and now, at two in the morning, I finish my letter sleepily. Many beautiful *souvenirs* have been sent us, and amongst others, the Count de S—— V—— has just sent C —— n a model of the palace of Madrid, one of the most beautiful and ingenious pieces of workmanship possible. It is carved in wood, with astonishing accuracy and delicacy.

My next letter will be dated on board the Jason.

LETTER THE THIRD.

Departure in the Jason — Spanish Captain and Officers — Life on board a Man of War — "*Balances*" — Fishing — "*Le petit tambour*" — Cocoa-nuts — A *Norte* — Spanish proverb — Peak of Orizava — Theory and practice — *Norte chocolatero* — Contrary winds — Chain of Mountains — Goleta.

JASON, 24th November.

THIS morning, at six o'clock, we breakfasted, together with Captain Estrada, the commander of the Jason, at the *Casa H——a*; and the wind being fair, repaired shortly after in volantes to the wharf, accompanied by our hospitable host, and several of our acquaintances; entered the boat, looked our last of the Palace and the Yntendencia, and of Havana itself, where we had arrived as strangers, and which now, in fifteen days, had begun to assume a familiar aspect, and to appear interesting in our eyes, by the mere force of human sympathy; and were transported to the ship, where a line of marines, drawn up to receive us, presented arms as we entered. The morning was beautiful; little wind, but fair. We took leave of our friends, waived our handkerchiefs to the balconies in return for signals from scarcely-distinguishable figures, passed beneath the red-tinted Cabaña and the stately Morro, and were once more upon the deep, with a remembrance behind, and a hope before us. Our *Bergantina* is a handsome vessel,

with twenty-five guns, five officers, a doctor, chaplain and purser, and one hundred and fifty men.

We find the commander very attentive, and a perfect gentleman, like almost all of his class, and though very young in appearance, he has been twenty-nine years in the service.

25*th*. — The weather delightful, and the ship going at the rate of five knots an hour. The accommodations in a brig not destined for passengers are of course limited. There is a large cabin for the officers, separated by a smaller one, belonging to the captain, which he has given up to us.

At seven o'clock, C —— n rises, and at eight, a marine sentinel, transformed into a lady's page, whom we are taking to Mexico as Porter, brings us some very delicious chocolate. He is followed by the Captain's familiar, an unhappy-looking individual, pale, lank and lean, with the physiognomy of a methodist parson, and in general appearance like a weed that has grown up in one night. He tremblingly, and with most rueful countenance, carries a small plate of sugar-biscuits. These originals having vacated the cabin, I proceed to dress, an operation of some difficulty, which being performed *tant bien que mal*, I repair up stairs, armed with book and fan, and sit on deck till ten o'clock, when the familiar's lamentable announcement of breakfast, takes us down stairs. The cook being French, the *comestibles* are decidedly good, and were the artist a little less of an oil and more of a water painter, I individually would prefer his style. We have every variety of fish, meat, fowl, fruit, *dulces* and wines.

A very long interval has to be filled up, by reading, writing, sitting or walking upon deck, as suits the taste of the individual, or by drinking orangeade, or by sleeping, or by any other ingenious resource for killing time. At five, dinner, at which no one joins us but the captain and one officer; and after dinner, on deck till bed-time, walking about, or gazing on the sky or sea, or listening to the songs of the sailors.

26th. — Little wind, but a day of such abominably cruel "*balances*," as they call them, that one is tempted to find rest by jumping overboard. Everything broken or breaking. Even the cannons disgorge their balls, which fall out by their own weight.

28th. — We have had two days of perfect weather, though very warm; the sky blue, without one cloud. To-day we are on the sound, and have lain to, about noon, to let the sailors fish, thereby losing an hour or so of fair wind, and catching a preposterous number of fish of immense size. The water was so clear, that we could see the fish rush and seize the bait as fast as it was thrown in. Sometimes a huge shark would bite the fish in two, so that the poor finny creature was between Scylla and Charybdis. These fish are called *cherne* and *pargo*, and at dinner were pronounced good. At length a shark, in its wholesale greediness, seized the bait, and feeling the hook in his horrid jaw, tugged most fiercely to release himself, but in vain. Twelve sailors hauled him in, when, with distended jaws, he seemed to look out for the legs of the men, whereupon they rammed the butt-end of a harpoon down his throat, which put a stop to all further proceedings on his part. He was said to be

quite young, perhaps the child of doting parents. The juvenile monster had, however, already cut three rows of teeth. . . .

We are sometimes amused in the evening, when upon deck, by a little drummer, who invariably collects all the sailors round him, and spins them long, endless stories of his own invention, to which they listen with intense interest. On he goes, without a moment's hesitation, inventing everything most improbable and wonderful; of knights and giants and beautiful princesses, and imprisoned damsels, and poor peasants becoming great kings. He is a little ugly, active fellow, with a turned-up nose, a merry eye and a laughing mouth. Amongst his axioms is the following verse, which he sings with great expression.

Hasta los palos del monte
Tienen su destinacion
Unos nacen para santos
Y otros para hacer carbon.

which may be translated so:

Even the mountain-trees
Have their allotted goal,
For some are born for saints
Whilst others serve for coal.

29th.—Beautiful day, fair wind, great heat and more fishing. At least thirty large fish were caught this morning, also an infant shark, a grandchild who had wandered forth to nibble, and met an untimely grave. We have seen several alacrans, or scorpions on board, but these are said not to be poisonous. The ship is the perfection of cleanness. No disa-

greeable odor affects the olfactory nerves, in which it has a singular advantage over all packets. This, and having it all to ourselves, and the officers being such perfect gentlemen and all so kind and attentive, makes our voyage so far a mere pleasure trip.

We had some of the Countess de V——'s cocoa-nuts, of which she sent us a great supply, pierced this morning, each containing three tumblers of fresh and delicious water.

1*st December.* — We are now about thirty leagues from Vera Cruz, and if the wind blows a little fresher, may reach it to-morrow. This is Sunday, but the chaplain is too sick to say mass, and the heat is intense.

2*d.* — An unpleasant variety — a *Norte!* I knew it was coming on, only by the face of the first lieutenant when he looked at the barometer. His countenance fell as many degrees as the instrument. It is very slight, but our entry into port will be delayed, for, on the coast, these winds are most devoutly dreaded. It has rained all day, and notwithstanding the rolling of the ship, we attempted a game at chess, but after having tried two games, abandoned it in despair, a "*balance*" having at the most interesting period of each, overturned the board, and left the victory undecided, somewhat after the fashion of Homer's goddess, when she enveloped the contending armies in a cloud.

4*th.* — Yesterday evening a south wind, and the Spanish proverb says truly

> "Sur duro,
> Norte Seguro."

> "A south wind strong,
> The norther ere long."

This morning the sky is covered with watery clouds, yet we can see the Cofre de Perote and the peak of Orizava, which are thirty leagues inland! The latter, called by the Mexicans, Citlal Tepetl, or the mountain of the star, from the fire which used to burn on its lofty summit, rises nineteen thousand five hundred and fifty-one feet above the level of the sea. Covered with perpetual snows, and rising far above clouds and tempests, it is the first mountain which the navigator discovers as he approaches these shores.

But the south wind continues and we are obliged to turn our back to the coast. There is much impatience on board. A—— was taken ill, and declared she had got the yellow fever. The doctor was sent for, who, very sick himself, and holding by the table to keep himself from falling, told her, without looking at her very particularly, that there was nothing the matter, only to keep herself "*quite quiet and still;*" and the ship rolling at the same moment, he pitched head-foremost out of the cabin, showing practically how much easier precept is than example. As we shall no doubt have a norther after this, which may last three days, our promised land is still at some distance.

5th.—The weather is charming, but the southwest wind holds most implacably, and the barometer has fallen five or six degrees, which, added to other signs of the times known to navigators, causes all hands to prepare for the dreaded enemy.

6th.—Job never was on board a ship. A norther, not a very severe one, but what they call a *Norte chocolatero*, that is, its shock tore a sail in two, as I

tear this sheet of paper. The most ingenious person I see is the "master of the sails." He sews most excessively quick and well. Towards evening the wind calmed, but the ship, tossed upon a horribly swelled sea, became a mortal purgatory. Still the wind is lulled, though Humboldt and others say that a Norte must last forty-eight hours, and we have only had it for twenty-four. We shall see.

7th. — A most horrible night! My hammock, which I had foolishly preferred to a bed, not having room to swing in, threw me furiously against the wall, till fearing a broken head, I jumped out and lay on the floor. To-day there is a comparative calm, a faint continuation of the Norte, which is an air with variations. Everything now seems melancholy and monotonous. We have been tossed about during four days in sight of Vera Cruz, and are now further from it than before. The officers begin to look miserable; even the cook with difficulty preserves his equilibrium.

Sunday, 8th. — A Norte! The sky is watery, and covered with shapeless masses of reddish clouds. This is a great day amongst all Spanish Catholics, *Le Virgen de la Concepcion,* the patroness of Spain and the Indies; but no mass to-day; the padre sick, and the Norte blowing. What a succession of long faces — walking barometers!

9th. — Yesterday evening the wind held out false hopes, and every one brightened up with caution, for the wind, though faintly, blew from the right quarter. The rain ceased, the weather cleared, and "hope, the charmer," smiled upon us. The greater

was our disappointment when the breeze died away, when the wind veered to the north, and when once more the most horrible rolling seized the unfortunate Jason, as if it were possessed by a demon. Finding it impossible to lie in my hammock, I stretched myself on the floor, where, during a night that seemed interminable, we were tossed up and down, knocked against the furniture, and otherwise maltreated.

This morning there is little wind, but that little from the north, so that the termination of our voyage appears as far off now as it did eight days ago. The faces of all on board are calmly lugubrious. Little said. A few Spanish shrugs interchanged with ominous significance.

10*th.* — As there is only one particular wind during which it is not dangerous to approach the coast, namely, "*la brisa,*" the breeze which usually follows the norther, we may spend our Christmas here. The weather is beautiful, though very sultry, especially during the calms which intervene between the *nortes.* With books one might take patience, but I have read and re-read backwards and forwards everything I possess, or can find — reviews, magazines, a volume of Humboldt, even an odd volume of the "Barber of Paris" — "Turkish Letters," *purporting* to be the translation of a continuation of Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes, and in which the hero, disguised as a gardener, brings the Visier's daughter a bouquet, which she condescendingly receives, lying in bed á l'Espagnole! I am now reduced to a very serious Spanish work on the truth of Christianity.

This evening, to the joy of all on board, arose the long-desired breeze. The ship went slowly and steadily on her course, at first four, then eight knots an hour. The captain, however, looked doubtingly, and, indeed, towards morning, the wind changed to the south, and our hopes died away.

11*th.* — Contrary wind. A south, expected to be followed by a "norte seguro." But now, at eleven, A. M., it is quite calm, and very sultry, whilst to increase, if possible, our weariness, a long range of lofty mountains stretches along the horizon, from Punta Delgada to the Cofre de Perote, and on till they seem to sink in the ocean. Behind the Cofre, rises Orizava, now like a white cloud, but this morning tinged with a rosy light by the rays of the rising sun. The sea is tranquil and the horizon clear, nevertheless, the enemy is looked for. There are a few white and feathery clouds flickering about in the sky, and there is an uneasy swell in the waves. . . . . At three o'clock, out burst the norther, which, like the flaming sword, guarding the issues of paradise,

> "Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate
> With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms,"

seems to warn off all vessels from approaching these iron-bound shores. Eleven days within a few hours distance of the coast!

16*th.* — Five days more passed with a continuation of contrary winds and constant rolling. We are further from hope than we were fourteen days ago. Captain, officers, sailors, all seem nearly disheartened. This morning they caught the most beauti-

ful fish I ever beheld, of the dolphin species — the Cleopatra of the ocean, about four feet long, apparently entirely composed of gold, and studded with turquoises. It changed color in dying. There is a proverb, which the sailors are repeating to each other, not very encouraging: "Este es el viage del Orinoco. Que él que no se murio, se volvió loco." "This is the voyage of the Orinoco, in which he who did not die, became crazy."

17*th.* — Spoke a goleta, which came close up by our vessel, and seemed to have a miserable set on board, amongst others, a worthy pair from Havana. who have just come out of prison, having been accused of murdering a negro. The wind continues contrary. I shall fold up this sea-scrawl, and write no more till we reach Vera Cruz.

LETTER THE FOURTH.

Distant View of Vera Cruz — Pilots — Boat from the City — Mutual Salutes — Approach to Vera Cruz — Crowd on the wharf — House of Don Dionisio V——o — Guard of Honor — German Piano — Supper — Madonna — Aspect of the City — *Sopilotes* — Deliberations — General Guadalupe Victoria — Two-headed Eagle — Dilapidated Saint — Harp — Theatre — Doña Inocencia Martinez — Invitation from General Santa Anna.

VERA CRUZ, 18th.

THIS morning, the sanguine hoped and the desponding feared, for the wind, though inclining to *la brisa*, seemed unlikely to prove sufficiently strong to enable us to reach Vera Cruz — this being the twenty-fifth day since we left Havana; a voyage that, with a steamer, might be performed in three days, and with a sailing vessel and a fair wind, is made in six or seven. About noon, the aspect of things became more favorable. The breeze grew stronger, and with it our hopes.

At last appeared in view, faintly, certain spires beside the low sandy land, which for some time we had anxiously watched, and at length we could distinguish houses and churches, and the fort of San Juan de Ulua, of warlike memory. By slow but sure degrees, we neared the shore, until Vera Cruz, in all its ugliness, became visible to our much-wearied eyes. We had brought a pilot from Havana to guide

us to these dangerous coasts, but though a native of these parts, it seemed that a lapse of years had blunted his memory, for we had nearly run upon the rocks. A gun was therefore fired, and another pilot came out, who at sight of the Spanish flag waxed enthusiastic, and pointing out the castle to our ignorant friend, exclaimed, alluding to the desperate struggle made by the Spaniards to defend this their last stronghold at the end of the war, "*We*, although but a handful of men, defended ourselves for years like soldiers, and now these Frenchmen took it in three days!" and, walking about in a transport of patriotic despair, he seemed to forget his actual duty in the tide of remembrances which the sight of Spanish colors and a Spanish crew had called forth.

Anything more melancholy, *délabré* and forlorn, than the whole appearance of things as we drew near, cannot well be imagined. On one side, the fort, with its black and red walls; on the other, the miserable, black-looking city, with hordes of large black birds, called *sopilotes*, hovering over some dead carcase or flying heavily along in search of carrion. Still, as the goal of our voyage, even its dreary aspect was welcome, and the very hills of red sand by which it is surrounded, and which look like the deserts of Arabia, appeared inviting.

A boat, full of cocked hats was now seen approaching from the city, containing the Consul in full uniform, and other authorities. C——n having sent for and obtained permission from the Governor, to permit the Jason, contrary to established usages, to anchor beneath the castle, a salute of twenty guns

was fired from our ship. Being upon deck, I was nearly suffocated with smoke and powder. A salute of the same number of cannon was then fired from the castle, in honor of the first Spanish man-of-war that has appeared in this port since the Revolution.

And now we prepared, before the sun went down, to leave our watery prison; and the captain's boat being manned, and having taken leave of the officers, we, that is, C——n, the commander, and I, and my French maid and her French poodle, got into it. Then came a salute of twenty guns from the Jason in our honor, and we rowed off amidst clouds of smoke. Then the fort gave us welcome with the same number of guns, and, amidst all this cannonading, we were landed at the wharf.

A singular spectacle the wharf presented. A crowd, as far as the eye could reach, of all ages and sexes of Vera Cruzians, (and a very curious set they seemed to be,) were assembled to witness His Excellency's arrival. Some had no pantaloons; and others, to make up for their neighbors' deficiencies, had two pair — the upper slit up the side of the leg, Mexican fashion. All had large hats, with silver or bead rolls, and every tinge of dark complexion, from the pure Indian, upwards. Some dresses were entirely composed of rags, clinging together by the attraction of cohesion; others had only a few holes to let in the air. All were crowding, jostling, and nearly throwing each other into the water, and gazing with faces of intense curiosity.

But a plume of colored feathers was seen towering above the copper-colored crowd, and immediate

passage was made for an aid-de-camp from the Governor, General Guadalupe Victoria. He was an immensely tall man, in a showy uniform all covered with gold, with colossal epaulettes and a towering plume of rainbow-colored feathers. He brought to C——n the welcome and congratulations of the General, and those Spanish offers of service and devotion which sound agreeably, whatever be their true value.

We now began to move through the crowd, which formed a line on either side to let us pass, and entered the streets of Vera Cruz, which were crowded, balconies and all, and even roofs, with curious faces. The guard formed as we passed, and struck up a march. The principal street is wide and clean, and we reached the house of Señor V——o, a rich merchant, formerly consul, where we are to reside, followed to the door by the whole population. We were received with great hospitality, and found excellent rooms prepared for us. The house is immensely large and airy, built in a square, as they all are, but with that unfurnished, melancholy look, which as yet this style of house has to me, though admirably adapted to the climate.

A guard of honor, sent by General Victoria, trotted into the court-yard, whose attendance C——n declined with thanks, observing that his mission had for object to terminate the coolness hitherto existing between two families of brothers; that between members of the same family there was nothing to fear, and all compliments were unnecessary.

I found a German piano in the drawing-room, on which I was glad to put my fingers after a month's

abstinence. A number of gentlemen came in the evening to visit C——n. We were received by this family with so much real kindness, that we soon found ourselves perfectly at home. We had a plentiful supper — fish, meat, wine and chocolate, fruit and sweetmeats; the cookery, Spanish *Vera-Cruzified.* A taste of the style was enough for me, garlic and oil enveloping meat, fish and fowl, with pimentos and plantains, and all kinds of curious fruit, which I cannot yet endure. Bed was not unwelcome, and most comfortable beds we had, with mosquito curtains, and sheets and pillows all trimmed with rich lace, so universal in Spanish houses, that it is not, as with us, a luxury. But the mosquitoes had entered in some unguarded moment, and they and the heat were inimical to sleep.

19*th.* — I opened my eyes this morning on the painting of a very lovely Madonna, which hung, unvalued and ill-framed, in one corner of the apartment. At eight, rose and dressed, and went to breakfast. Here, when there are two guests whom they wish to distinguish, the gentleman is placed at the head of the table, and *his* lady beside him.

To me nothing can exceed the sadness of the aspect of this city and of its environs — mountains of moving sand, formed by the violence of the north winds, and which, by the reflection of the sun's rays, must greatly increase the suffocating heat of the atmosphere. The scene may resemble the ruins of Jerusalem, though without its sublimity. The houses seem blackened by fire; there is not a carriage on the streets — nothing but the men with the wide

trowsers slit up the side of the leg, immense hats, and blankets, or *sarapes*, merely a closed blanket, more or less fine, with a hole for the head to go through; and the women with *rebosos*, long colored cotton scarfs or pieces of ragged stuff, thrown over the head, and crossing over the left shoulder. Add to this, the sopilotes cleaning the streets, disgusting, but useful scavengers. These valuable birds have black feathers, with gray heads, beaks and feet. They fly in troops, and at night perch upon the trees, They are not republican, nor do they appear inclined to declare their independence, having kings, to whom it is said they pay so much respect, that if one of the royal species arrives at the same time with a plebeian sopilote, in sight of a dead body, the latter humbly waits till the sovereign has devoured his share, before he ventures to approach.

A few ladies in black gowns and mantillas called this morning, and various men. We find the weather sultry. In summer, with greater heat and the addition of the *vomito*, it must be a chosen city! The principal street, where we live, is very long and wide, and seems to have many good houses in it. Nearly opposite is one which seems particularly well kept and handsome, and where we saw beautiful flowers as we passed. I find it belongs to an English merchant.

There is much deliberation as to the mode in which we are to travel to Mexico. Some propose a coach, others a *litera*; others advise us to take the diligence. While in this indecision, we had a visit this morning from a remarkable-looking charac-

ter, Don Miguel S——, agent for the diligence office in Mexico, a tall, dark, energetic-looking person. He recommends the diligence, and offers, by accompanying us, to ensure our safety from accidents. He appears right. The diligence goes in four days, if it does not break down. The coach takes any time we choose over that; the *literas* nine or ten days, going slowly on mules with a sedan-chair motion. The diligence has food and beds provided for it at the inns — the others nothing. I am in favor of the diligence.

The couple from Havana, whom we passed in the *goleta*, have very coolly requested permission to accompany us to Mexico, "under the protection of the *Embajador de España*." We should set off in select company.

C——n called this morning on General Victoria. Found his Excellency in a large hall without furniture or ornament of any sort, without even chairs, and altogether in a style of more than republican simplicity. He has just returned the visit, accompanied by his colossal aid-de-camp.

General Guadalupe Victoria is perhaps the last man in a crowd whom one would fix upon as being the owner of the above high-sounding cognomen, which in fact is not his original but his assumed name, *Guadalupe* being adopted by him in honor of the renowned image of the virgin of that name, and *Victoria* with less humility, to commemorate his success in battle. He is an honest, plain, down-looking citizen, lame and tall, somewhat at a loss for conversation, apparently, amiable and good-natured, but

certainly neither courtier nor orator; a man of undeniable bravery, capable of supporting almost incredible hardships, humane, and who has always proved himself a sincere lover of what he considered liberty, without ever having been actuated by ambitious or interested motives.

It is said that his defects were indolence, want of resolution, and too much reliance on his own knowledge. He is the only Mexican president who finished as chief magistrate, the term prescribed by the laws. It is alleged, in proof of his simplicity, though I think it is too absurd to be true, that having received a dispatch with the two-headed eagle on the seal, he remarked to the astonished envoy who delivered it — "Our arms are very much alike, only I see that his majesty's eagles have two heads. I have heard that some of that species exist here, in tierra caliente, and shall have one sent for."

The General is not married, but appears rather desirous of entering the united state. He strongly recommends us to avoid broken bones by going in literas, at least as far as Jalapa. Having stumbled about for some time in search of his cocked hat, it was handed to him by his aid-de-camp, and he took leave.

We walked out in the evening to take a look of the environs, with Señor V——o, the commander of the Jason, and several young ladies of the house. We walked in the direction of an old church, where it is or was the custom for young ladies desirous of being married to throw a stone at the saint, their fortune depending upon the stone's hitting him, so

that he is in a lapidated and dilapidated condition. Such environs! the surrounding houses black with smoke of powder or with fire — a view of bare red sand-hills all round — not a tree, or shrub, or flower, or bird, except the horrid black sopilote, or police officer. All looks as if the prophet Jeremiah had passed through the city denouncing wo to the dwellers thereof. Such a melancholy, wholly deserted-looking burial ground as we saw!

War and revolutions have no doubt done their work, yet I find difficulty in believing those who speak of Vera Cruz as having been a gay and delightful residence in former days, though even now, those who have resided here for any length of time, even foreigners, almost invariably become attached to it; and as for those born here, they are the truest of patriots, holding up Vera Cruz as superior to all other parts of the world.

The city was founded by the Viceroy, Count de Monterey, at the end of the seventeenth century, and ought not to be confounded, as it sometimes is, with either of the two colonies founded by the first Spaniards. Built in front of the island of San Juan de Ulua, it has one interesting recollection attached to it, since on these same arid shores, Cortes disembarked more than three centuries ago. Unlike the green and fertile coast which gladdened the eyes of Columbus, the Spanish conqueror beheld a bleak and burning desert, whose cheerless aspect might well have deterred a feebler mind from going further in search of the paradise that existed behind.

We returned to the house, and heard some ladies

play upon a harp, so called, a small, light instrument in that form, but without pedals, so light, that they can lift it with one hand; and yet the music they bring from it is surprising; one air after another, a little monotonously, but with great ease and a certain execution, and with the additional merit of being self-taught.

I imagine that there must be a great deal of musical taste thrown away here. There are pianos in almost every house, and one lady, who came to see me to-day, and whose mother was English, had been extremely well taught, and played with great taste. They attempted dancing, but having no masters, can only learn by what they *hear*. On the balcony, this evening, it was delightful, and the moon is a universal beautifier.

21*st*. — We walked about the city yesterday, and returned visits. The streets are clean, and some few churches tolerably handsome.

The *Comicos* came in the morning to offer us the centre box in the theatre, it being the benefit night of Doña Inocencia Martinez from Madrid, a favorite of the public, and, in fact, a pretty woman, and good comic actress. The theatre is small, and they say generally deserted, but last night it was crowded. The drop-scene represents the fine arts, who are so fat, that their condition here must be flourishing. We were, however, agreeably disappointed in the performance, which was the "Segunda Dama Duende," nearly a translation from the "*Domino Noir*," and very amusing; full of excellent coups-de-théatre. Doña Inocencia in her various characters, as domino,

servant-girl, abbess, &c., was very handsome, and acted with great spirit. Moreover, she and her sister, with two Spaniards, danced the Jota Aragonesa in perfection, so that we spent a pleasant evening, upon the whole, within the precincts of the city of the True Cross.

To-morrow is the day fixed for our departure, and we shall not be sorry to leave this place, although this house is excellent, a whole suite of rooms given to us, and neither ceremony nor *géne* of any sort. The weather is certainly beautiful. The heat may be a little oppressive in the middle of the day, but the evenings are cool and delightful.

We had a visit yesterday, from the English and French consuls. M. de —— prophecies broken arms and dislodged teeth, if we persist in our plan of taking the diligence, but all things balanced, we think it preferable to every other conveyance. General Victoria returned to see us this morning, and was very civil and amiable, offering very cordially every service and assistance in his power. We are to rise to-morrow at two, being invited to breakfast with General Santa Anna, at his country seat Manga de Clavo, a few leagues from this.

We have been sitting on the balcony till very late, enjoying the moonlight and a refreshing breeze from the sea, and as we rise before day-break, our rest will be but short.

LETTER THE FIFTH.

Departure from Vera Cruz — Sand-hills — Oriental scene — Manga de Clavo — General Santa Anna — Breakfast — Escort and diligence — Santa Fé — Puente Nacional — Bridge sketched by Mrs. Ward — Country in December — Don Miguel — First impressions — Fruit — Plan del Rio — German musicians — Sleeping Captain — Approach to Jalapa — Appearance of the City — Cofre de Perote — Flowers — House and rock — Last view of Jalapa — Change of scenery — San Miguel de los Soldados — Perote — Striking scene before day-break — Non-arrival of escort — Yankee coachman — Dispute — Departure — Company of lancers — Alcalde — Breakfast at La ventilla — Pulque — Double escort — Crosses — Brigand-looking tavern-keeper — Ojo de Agua — Arrival at Puebla — Dress of the peasants — Christmas eve — Inn — "*Nacimiento.*"

JALAPA, 23d December.

YESTERDAY morning, at two o'clock, we rose by candle light, with the pleasant prospect of leaving Vera Cruz and of seeing Santa Anna. Two boxes, called carriages, drawn by mules, were at the door, to convey us to Manga de Clavo. Señor V——o, C——n, the commander of the Jason and I being encased in them, we set off half asleep. By the faint light, we could just distinguish as we passed the gates, and the carriages ploughed their way along, nothing but sand — sand — as far as the eye could reach; a few leagues of Arabian desert.

At length we began to see symptoms of vegetation; occasional palm-trees and flowers, and by the

time we had reached a pretty Indian village, where we stopped to change mules, the light had broke in, and we seemed to have been transported, as if by enchantment, from a desert to a garden. It was altogether a picturesque and striking scene; the huts composed of bamboo, and thatched with palm-leaves, the Indian women with their long black hair standing at the doors with their half-naked children, the mules rolling themselves on the ground, according to their favorite fashion, snow-white goats browzing amongst the palm-trees, and the air so soft and balmy, the first fresh breath of morning; the dew-drops still glittering on the broad leaves of the banana and palm, and all around so silent, cool and still.

The huts, though poor, were clean; no windows, but a certain subdued light makes its way through the leafy canes. We procured some tumblers of new milk, and having changed mules, pursued our journey, now no longer through hills of sand, but across the country, through a wilderness of trees and flowers, the glowing productions of *tierra caliente*. We arrived about five at Manga de Clavo, after passing through leagues of natural garden, the property of Santa Anna.

The house is pretty, slight-looking, and kept in nice order. We were received by an aid-de-camp in uniform, and by several officers, and conducted to a large, cool, agreeable apartment, with little furniture, into which shortly entered the Señora de Santa Anna, tall, thin, and at that early hour of the morning, dressed to receive us in clear white muslin, with white satin shoes, and with very splendid diamond ear-rings,

brooch and rings. She was very polite, and introduced her daughter Guadalupe, a miniature of her mamma, in features and costume.

In a little while entered General Santa Anna himself; a gentlemanly, good-looking, quietly dressed, rather melancholy-looking person, with one leg, apparently somewhat of an invalid, and to us the most interesting person in the group. He has a sallow complexion, fine dark eyes, soft and penetrating, and an interesting expression of face. Knowing nothing of his past history, one would have said a philosopher, living in dignified retirement, one who had tried the world, and found that all was vanity, one who had suffered ingratitude, and who, if he were ever persuaded to emerge from his retreat, would only do so, Cincinnatus-like, to benefit his country. It is strange, how frequently this expression of philosophic resignation, of placid sadness, is to be remarked on the countenances of the deepest, most ambitious, and most designing men. C——n gave him a letter from the Queen, written under the supposition of his being still President, with which he seemed much pleased, but merely made the innocent observation, "How very well the Queen writes!"

It was only now and then, that the expression of his eye was startling, especially when he spoke of his leg, which is cut off below the knee. He speaks of it frequently, like Sir John Ramorny of his bloody hand, and when he gives an account of his wound, and alludes to the French on that day, his countenance assumes that air of bitterness which Ramorny's

may have exhibited when speaking of "Harry the Smith."

Otherwise, he made himself very agreeable, spoke a great deal of the United States, and of the persons he had known there, and in his manners was quiet and gentlemanlike, and altogether a more polished hero than I had expected to see. To judge from the past, he will not long remain in his present state of inaction, besides having within him, according to Zavala, "a principle of action forever impelling him forward."

En attendant, breakfast was announced. The Señora de Santa Anna led me in. C——n was placed at the head of the table, I on his right, Santa Anna opposite, the Señora on my right. The breakfast was very handsome, consisting of innumerable Spanish dishes, meat and vegetables, fish and fowl, fruits and sweetmeats, all served in white and gold French porcelain, with coffee, wines, &c. After breakfast, the Señora having despatched an officer for her cigar-case, which was gold, with a diamond latch, offered me a cigar, which I having declined, she lighted her own, a little paper "cigarito," and the gentlemen followed her good example.

We then proceeded to look at the out-houses and offices; at the General's favorite war-horse, an old white charger, probably a sincerer philosopher than his master; at several game-cocks, kept with especial care, cock-fighting being a favorite recreation of Santa Anna's; and at his *litera* which is handsome and comfortable. There are no gardens, but as he observed, the whole country, which for twelve leagues

square belongs to him, is a garden. The appearance of the family says little for the healthiness of the *locale*; and indeed its beauty and fertility will not compensate for its insalubrity.

As we had but a few hours to spare, the General ordered round two carriages, both very handsome, and made in the United States, one of which conveyed him and C——n, the Señora and me. In the other were the little girl and the officers, in which order we proceeded across the country to the high road, where the diligence and servants, with our guide, Don Miguel S——, were to overtake us. The diligence not having arrived, we got down and sat on a stone bench, in front of an Indian cottage, where we talked, while the young lady amused herself by eating apples, and C——n and the General remained moralizing in the carriage.

Shortly after, and just as the sun was beginning to give us a specimen of his power, our lumbering escort of Mexican soldiers galloped up, (orders having been given by the government that a fresh escort shall be stationed every six leagues,) and announced the approach of the diligence. We were agreeably disappointed by the arrival of a handsome new coach, made in the United States, drawn by ten good-looking mules, and driven by a smart Yankee coachman. Our party consisted of ourselves, Don Miguel, the captain of the Jason and his first lieutenant, who accompany us to Mexico. The day was delightful, and every one apparently in good humor. We took leave of General Santa Anna, his lady and daughter, also of our hospitable entertainer, Señor V——o; got

into the diligence — doors shut — all right — lash up the mules, and now for Mexico!

Gradually, as in Dante's Commedia, after leaving Purgatory, typified by Vera Cruz, we seemed to draw nearer to Paradise. The road is difficult, as the approach to Paradise ought to be, and the extraordinary jolts were sufficient to prevent us from being too much enraptured by the scenery, which increased in beauty as we advanced. At Santa Fé and Sopilote we changed horses, and at Tolomé, one of the sites of the civil war, came to the end of Santa Anna's twelve leagues of property.

We arrived at Puente Nacional, formerly Puente del Rey, celebrated as the scene of many an engagement during the Revolution, and by occupying which, Victoria frequently prevented the passage of the Spanish troops, and that of the convoys of silver to the port. Here we stopped a short time to admire the beautiful bridge thrown over the river Antigua, with its stone arches, which brought Mrs. Ward's sketch to my recollection, though it is very long since I saw the book. We were accompanied by the commander of the fort. It is now a peaceful-looking scene. We walked to the bridge, pulled branches of large white flowers, admired the rapid river dashing over the rocks, and the fine, bold scenery that surrounds it. The village is a mere collection of huts, with some fine trees.

It was difficult to believe, as we journeyed on, that we were now in the midst of December. The air was soft and balmy. The heat, without being oppressive, that of a July day in England. The road

lay through a succession of woody country; trees covered with every variety of blossom, and loaded with the most delicious tropical fruits; flowers of every color filling the air with fragrance, and the most fantastical profusion of parasitical plants intertwining the branches of the trees, and flinging their bright blossoms over every bough. Palms, cocoas, oranges, lemons, succeeded one another, and at one turn of the road, down in a lovely green valley, we caught a glimpse of an Indian woman, with her long hair, resting under the shade of a lofty tree, beside a running stream — an Oriental picture. Had it not been for the dust and the jolting, nothing could have been more delightful. As for Don Miguel, with his head out of the window, now desiring the coachman to go more quietly, now warning us to prepare for a jolt, now pointing out everything worth looking at, and making light of all difficulties, he was the very best conductor of a journey I ever met with. His hat of itself was a curiosity to us; a white beaver with immense brim, lined with thick silver tissue, with two large silver rolls and tassels round it.

One circumstance must be observed by all who travel in Mexican territory. There is not one human being or passing object to be seen that is not in itself a picture, or which would not form a good subject for the pencil. The Indian women, with their plaited hair, and little children slung to their backs, their large straw hats, and petticoats of two colors — the long strings of arrièros with their loaded mules, and swarthy, wild-looking faces — the chance horseman who passes with his *sarape* of many colors, his

high ornamented saddle, Mexican hat, silver stirrups and leather boots — all is picturesque. Salvator Rosa and Hogarth might have travelled here to advantage, hand-in-hand; Salvator for the sublime, and Hogarth taking him up where the sublime became the ridiculous.

At La Calera, we had a distant view of the sea. Occasionally we stopped to buy oranges fresh from the trees, pine-apples and granaditas, which are like Brobdinagian gooseberries, the pulp enclosed in a very thick, yellow or green rind, and very refreshing.

It was about seven in the evening, when very dusty, rather tired, but very much enchanted with all we had seen, we arrived at Plan del Rio. Here the diligence passengers generally stop for the night, that is, sleep a few hours on a hard bed, and rise at midnight to go on to Jalapa. But to this arrangement, I for one, made vociferous objections, and strongly insisted upon the propriety and feasibility of sleeping at Jalapa that night. Don Miguel, the most obsequious of Dons, declared it should be exactly as the Señora ordered.

Accordingly it was agreed, that we should wait for the moon, and then pursue our journey, and meanwhile we walked out to a short distance, to see the bridge, the river, and the wood. The bridge consists of a single large arch thrown over the river, and communicating with a great high road, formerly paved, but now going to ruin.

We returned to the inn, a long row of small rooms, built of brick and prettily situated, not far from the water. Here we had the luxury of water and towels,

which enabled us to get rid of a certain portion of dust before we went to supper.

The diligence from Jalapa had just deposited at the inn, a German with his wife and child, he bearing so decidedly the stamp of a German musician, that we at once guessed his calling. They are from Mexico, from whence the fine arts seem to be taking their flight, and gave a most woful account of the road between this and Jalapa.

We had a very tolerable supper; soup, fish, fowls, steak and *frijoles*, all well seasoned with garlic and oil. The jolting had given me too bad a headache to care for more than coffee. We were strongly advised to remain the night there, but lazy people know too well what it is to rise in the middle of the night, especially when they are much fatigued; and when the moon rose, we packed ourselves once more into the diligence, sufficiently refreshed to encounter new fatigues. The moon was very bright, and most of the party prepared themselves for sleep with cigars in their mouths; not a very easy matter, for the roads were infamous, a succession of holes and rocks. As we were gradually ascending, the weather became cooler, and from cool began to grow cold, forcing us to look out for cloaks and shawls. We could now discern some change in the vegetation, or rather a mingling of the trees of a colder climate with those of the tropics, especially the Mexican oak, which begins to flourish here. Fortunately, at one part of the road, the moon enabled us to see the captain of the escort lying on the ground fast asleep, his horse standing quietly beside him, he having fallen

off while asleep, and continued his nap. The soldiers shook him up with some difficulty.

At *Corral falso* we changed mules, and from the badness of the road, continued to go slowly.

The cold increased, and at last by the moonlight, we had a distinct view of the Peak of Orizava, with his white night-cap on, (excuse the simile, suggested by extreme sleepiness,) the very sight enough to make one shiver.

As we approached Jalapa, the scene was picturesque. The escort had put on their *sarapes*, and, with their high helmets and feathers, went galloping along and dashing amongst the trees and shrubs. Orizava and the Cofre de Perote shone white in the distance, while a delicious smell of flowers, particularly of roses, gave token of the land through which we were passing.

It was nearly two in the morning when we reached Jalapa, tired to death, and shivering with cold. Greatly we rejoiced as we rattled through its mountainous streets, and still more when we found ourselves in a nice clean inn, with brick floors and decent small beds, and everything prepared for us. The sight of a fire would have been too much luxury; however they gave us some hot tea, and very shortly after, I at least can answer for myself, that I was in bed, and enjoying the most delightful sleep that I have had since I left New York.

This morning, the diligence being at our disposal, we did not rise by break of day, but on the contrary continued to sleep till eight o'clock. I was waited on by such a nice, civil, clean little old woman, that

I should like to carry her off with me. Meanwhile, various authorities of the town were stationed at the door to give C——n welcome when he should appear.

Our breakfast was delicious. Such fresh eggs, and fresh butter, and good coffee and well-fried chickens; moreover such good bread and peculiarly excellent water, that we fell very much in love with Jalapa.

After breakfast we walked out, accompanied by various gentlemen of the place. The town consists of little more than a few steep streets, very old, with some large and excellent houses, the best as usual belonging to English merchants, and many to those of Vera Cruz, who come to live in or near Jalapa, during the reign of the "*Vomito*." There are some old churches, a very old convent of Franciscan monks, and a well-supplied market-place. Everywhere there are flowers — roses creeping over the old walls, Indian girls making green garlands for the virgin and saints, flowers in the shops, flowers at the windows, but above all, everywhere one of the most splendid mountain views in the world.

The Cofre de Perote, with its dark pine forests and gigantic *chest*, (a rock of porphyry which takes that form,) and the still loftier snow-white peak of Orizava, tower above all the others, seeming like the colossal guardians of the land. The intervening mountains, the dark cliffs and fertile plains, the thick woods of lofty trees clothing the hills and the valleys; a glimpse of the distant ocean; the surrounding lanes shaded by fruit trees; aloes, bananas, chiri-

moyas, mingled with the green liquidambar, the flowering myrtle, and hundreds of plants and shrubs and flowers of every color and of delicious fragrance, all combine to form one of the most varied and beautiful scenes that the eye can behold.

Then Jalapa itself, so old and gray and rose-becovered, with a sound of music issuing from every open door and window, and its soft and agreeable temperature, presents, even in a few hours, a series of agreeable impressions not easily effaced.

But we are now returned to our inn, for it is near noon, and the veil of clouds, that earlier in the morning enveloped Orizava, has passed away, leaving its white summit environed by a flood of light. I shall probably have no opportunity of writing until we reach Puebla.

PUEBLA, 24th.

Yesterday morning we took leave of the *Jalapeños*, and once more found ourselves *en route*. Such a view of the mountains as we ascended the steep road! and such flowers and blossoming trees on all sides! Large scarlet blossoms, and hanging purple and white flowers, and trees covered with fragrant bell-shaped flowers like lilies, which the people here call the *floripundio*, together with a profusion of double pink roses that made the air fragrant as we passed. And here and there a church, a ruined convent or a white Hacienda. We had the advantage of clear weather not always to be found at Jalapa, especially when the north wind, blowing at Vera Cruz, covers this city and its environs with a dense fog.

We stopped at a small village to change horses, (for on leaving Jalapa, our mules were exchanged for eight strong white horses,) and here Don Miguel made us enter a very pretty house belonging to some female friends of his, one of whom was very handsome, with a tasteful white turban. The curiosity of this place is a rock behind the house, covered with roses, clove-carnations, and every variety of bright flower-tree, together with oranges, lemons, limes, and cedrats, all growing out of the rock. The ladies were very civil, though I dare say surprised at our admiration of their December flowers, and gave us orangeade and cake, with large cedrats and oranges from the trees; but above all, the most delicious bouquet of roses and carnations; so that, together with the unknown scarlet and purple blossoms which the captain of the escort had gathered for me, the diligence inside looked like an arbor.

We continued our journey, the road ascending towards the table-land, and at one striking point of view, we got out and looked back upon Jalapa, and round upon a panorama of mountains. Gradually the vegetation changed. Fine, fresh-looking European herbage and trees succeeded the less hardy though more brilliant trees and flowers of the tropics. The banana and chirimoya gave place to the strong oak, and higher still, these were interspersed with the dark green of the pine.

At San Miguel de los Soldados we stopped to take some refreshment. The country became gradually more bleak, and before arriving at the village of Las Vigas, nearly all trees had disappeared but the hardy

fir, which flourishes amongst the rocks. The ground for about two leagues was covered with lava, and great masses of black calcined rock, so that we seemed to be passing over the crater of a volcano. This part of the country is deservedly called the *Mal Pais*, and the occasional crosses with their faded garlands, that gleam in these bleak, volcanic regions, give token that it may have yet other titles to the name of "the Evil Land." The roses and carnations that I had brought from Jalapa were still unwithered, so that in a few hours we had passed through the whole scale of vegetation.

The road became steep and dreary, and after passing *Cruz Blanca*, excepting occasional corn-fields and sombre pine forests, the scene had no objects of interest sufficient to enable us to keep our eyes open. The sun was set — it grew dusk, and by the time we reached Perote, where we were to pass the night, most of us had fallen into an uncomfortable sleep, very cold and quite stupefied, and too sleepy to be hungry, in spite of finding a large supper prepared for us.

The inn was dirty, very unlike that at Jalapa, the beds miserable, and we were quite ready to get up by the light of an unhappy specimen of tallow which the landlord brought to our doors at two in the morning.

There are some scenes which can never be effaced from our memory, and such a one was that which took place this morning at Perote at two o'clock, the moon and the stars shining bright and cold.

Being dressed, I went into the kitchen, where

C——n, the officers of the Jason, Don Miguel, and the Mexican captain of the last night's escort were assembled by the light of one melancholy sloping candle, together with a suspicious-looking landlord, and a few sleepy Indian women with bare feet, tangled hair, copper faces and rebosos. They made us some chocolate with goat's milk, horrid in general, and rancid in particular.

It appeared that all parties were at a stand-still, for by some mistake in the orders, the new escort had not arrived, and the escort of the preceding night could go no further. Don Miguel, with his swarthy face and great sarape, was stalking about, rather out of humor, while the captain was regretting, in very polite tones, with his calm, Arab-looking, impassive face, that his escort could proceed no further. He seemed to think it extremely probable that we should be robbed, believed, indeed had just heard it asserted, that a party of *ladrones* were looking out for el Señor Ministro, regretted that he could not assist us, though quite at our service, and recommended us to wait until the next escort should arrive.

To this advice our conductor would by no means listen. He was piqued that any detention should occur, and yet aware that it was unsafe to go on. He had promised to convey us safely, and in four days to Mexico, and it was necessary to keep his word. Some one proposed that two of the men should accompany the diligence upon mules, as probably a couple of these animals might be procured. The captain observed, that though entirely at our disposal, two men could be of no manner of use, as

in case of attack, resistance, except with a large escort, was worse than useless. Nevertheless it was remarked by some ingenious person, that the robbers seeing two, might imagine that there were more behind. In short there were various opinions. One proposed that they should go on the coach, another that they should go *in* it. Here I ventured to interpose, begging that they might ride on mules or go outside, but by no means within. As usual, it was as the Señora pleased.

At length we all collected before the door of the inn, and a queer group we must have made by the light of the moon, and a nice caricature I thought to myself, our friend Mr. G—— would have made of us, had he been there.

The diligence, with eight white horses and a Yankee coachman, originally no doubt called Brown, but now answering to the mellifluous appellation of *Bruno*; A——, with her French cap, and loaded with sundry mysterious-looking baskets; I, with cloak and bonnet; C——n with Greek cap, cloak and cigar; the captain of the Jason also with cloak and cigar, and very cold; the lieutenant in his navy uniform, taking it coolly; Don Miguel, with his great sarape and silver hat — (six people belonging to five different countries); the Mexican captain, with his pale impassive face and moustaches, enveloped in a very handsome sarape, and surrounded by the sleepy escort of the preceding night; dirty-looking soldiers lounging on the ground, wrapped in their blankets; the Indian women and the host of the inn, and a bright moon and starry sky lighting up

the whole — the figures in the foreground, and the lofty snow-clad mountains, and the dismal old town of Perote itself, that looked gray and sulky at being disturbed so early, with its old castle of San Carlos and cold, sterile plains.

Meanwhile, two soldiers with cloaks and arms, had climbed up outside of the coach. The captain remarked that they could not sit there. Bruno made some reply, upon which the captain very coolly drew his sword, and was about to put a very decided impediment to our journey by stabbing the coachman, when Don Miguel, his eyes and cigar all shining angrily, rushed in between them.

High words ensued between him and the captain, and the extreme coolness and precision with which the latter spoke, was very amusing. It was as if he were rehearsing a speech from a play. "I always speak frankly," said Don Miguel, in an angry tone. "And I," said the captain, in a polite, measured voice, "am also accustomed to speak my mind with extreme frankness. I regret, however, that I did not at the moment perceive the Señora at the door, otherwise," &c.

At length the two little men, who with their arms and sarapes looked like bundles of ammunition, and who half asleep had been by some zealous person, probably by our friend Bruno, tumbled upon the diligence like packages, were now rolled off it, and finally tumbled upon mules, and we got into the coach. Don Miguel, with his head out of the window, and not very easy in his mind, called up the two bundles and gave them directions as to their

line of conduct in a *stage* whisper, and they trotted off, primed with valor, while we very cold and (I answer for myself) rather frightened, proceeded on our way. The earliness of the hour was probably our salvation, as we started two hours before the usual time, and thus gained a march upon the gentlemen of the road.

We were not sorry, however, when, at our first halting-place, and whilst we were changing horses, we descried a company of lancers at full gallop, with a very good-looking officer at their head, coming along the road, though when I first heard the sound of horses' hoofs clattering along, and by the faint light, discerned the horsemen, enveloped as they were in a cloud of dust, I felt sure that they were a party of robbers. The captain made many apologies for the delay, and proceeded to inform us that the alcaldes of Tepeyagualco, La Ventilla, and of some other villages, whose names I forget, had for twenty days prepared a breakfast in expectation of his Excellency's arrival; — whether twenty breakfasts, or the same one cold, or *réchauffé*, we may never know.

The captain had a very handsome horse, which he caused to *caracolear* by the side of the diligence, and put at my disposal with a low bow, every time I looked at it. He discoursed with C——n of robbers and wars, and of the different sites which these gentry most affected, and told him how his first wife had been shot by following him in some engagement, yet how his second wife invariably followed him also.

Arrived at Tepeyagualco, after having passed over

a succession of sterile plains covered with scanty pasture, an alcalde advanced to meet the diligence, and hospitably made C——n an offer of the before-mentioned twenty days' entertainment, which he with many thanks declined. Who ate that breakfast, is buried in the past. Whether the alcalde was glad or sorry, did not appear. He vanished with a profusion of bows, and was followed by a large, good-looking Indian woman, who stood behind him while he made his discourse. Perhaps they eat together the long-prepared feast; which was at least one of the many tributes paid to the arrival of the first messenger of peace from the mother country.

At La Ventilla, however, we descended with a good appetite, and found several authorities waiting to give C——n a welcome. Here they gave us delicious chirimoyas, a natural custard, which we liked even upon a first trial, also granaditas, bananas, sapotes, &c. Here also I first tasted *pulque;* and on a first impression it appears to me, that as nectar was the drink in Olympus, we may fairly conjecture that Pluto cultivated the maguey in his dominions. The taste and smell combined took me so completely by surprise, that I am afraid my look of horror must have given mortal offence to the worthy alcalde, who considers it the most delicious beverage in the world; and, in fact, it is said, that when one gets over the first shock, it is very agreeable. The difficulty must consist in getting over it.

After a tolerable breakfast, hunger making chile and garlic supportable, we continued our route; and were informed that the robbers, having grown very

daring, and the next stage being very dangerous, our escort was to be doubled. Since we left Perote, the country had gradually become more dreary, and we had again got into the "*mal pais*," where nothing is to be seen but a few fir trees and pines, dark and stunted, black masses of lava, and an occasional, white cross to mark either where a murder has been committed, or where a celebrated robber has been buried. Of each, Don Miguel gave us a succinct account. Some lines of Childe Harold suit this scene as if written for it:

> "And here and there, as up the crags you spring,
> Mark many rude-carved crosses near the path:
> Yet deem not these devotion's offering —
> These are memorials frail of murderous wrath,
> For wheresoe'er the shrieking victim hath
> Pour'd forth his blood beneath the assassin's knife
> Some hand erects a cross of mouldering lath;
> And grove and glen with thousand such are rife,
> Throughout this purple land, where law secures not life."

The whole scene was wild and grand, yet dreary and monotonous, presenting the greatest contrast possible to our first day's journey. The only signs of life to be met with, were the long strings of arrieros with their droves of mules, and an occasional Indian hut, with a few miserable half-naked women and children.

At one small, wild-looking inn, where, very cold and miserable, we stopped, some hot wine was brought us, which was very acceptable. The tavern-keeper, for it was no more than a spirit-shop, if not a robber, had all the appearance of one; wild, melancholy, and with a most sinister expression of counte-

nance. Salvator never drew a more bandit-looking figure, as he stood there with his blanket and slouched hat, and a knife in his belt, tall and thin and muscular, with his sallow visage and his sad, fierce eyes. However, he showed us the marks on his door, where a band of twenty robbers had broken in one night, and robbed some travellers who were sleeping there, of a large some of money.

C——n asked him how the robbers treated the women when they fell into their power. "*Las saludan,*" said he, "and sometimes carry them off to the mountains, but rarely, and chiefly when they are afraid of their giving information against them."

At *Ojo de Agua*, where we changed horses, we saw the accommodations which those who travel in private coach or litera must submit to, unless they bring their own beds along with them, and a stock of provisions besides — a common room like a barn, where all must herd together; and neither chair, nor table, nor food to be had. It was a solitary-looking house, standing lonely on the plain, with a few straggling sheep nibbling the brown grass in the vicinity. A fine spring of water, from which it takes its name, and Orizava, which seems to have travelled forward, and stands in bold outline against the sapphire sky, were all that we saw there worthy of notice.

We changed horses at Nopaluca, Acagete and Amosoque, all small villages, with little more than the *posada*, and a few poor houses, and all very dirty. The country, however, improves in cultivation and fertility, though the chief trees are the sombre pines. Still accompanied by our two escorts, which had a

very grandiloquent effect, we entered, by four o'clock, Puebla de los Angeles, the second city to Mexico, (after Guadalajara) in the Republic, where we found very fine apartments prepared for us in the inn, and where, after a short rest and a fresh toilette, we went out to see what we could of the city before it grew dusk, before it actually became what it now is, *Christmas Eve!*

It certainly does require some time for the eye to become accustomed to the style of building adopted in the Spanish colonies. There is something at first sight exceedingly desolate-looking in these great wooden doors, like those of immense barns, the great iron-barred windows, the ill-paved court-yards, even the flat roofs; and then the streets, where, though this is a fête-day, we see nothing but groups of peasants or of beggars — the whole gives the idea of a total absence of comfort. Yet the streets of Puebla are clean and regular, the houses large, the cathedral magnificent, and the plaza spacious and handsome.

The cathedral was shut, and is not to be opened till midnight mass, which I regret the less as we must probably return here some day.

The dress of the Poblana peasants is pretty, especially upon fête-days. A white muslin chemise, trimmed with lace round the skirt, neck and sleeves, which are plaited neatly; a petticoat shorter than the chemise, and divided in two colors, the lower part made generally of a scarlet and black stuff, a manufacture of the country, and the upper part of yellow satin, with a satin vest of some bright color, and covered with gold or silver, open in front, and turned

back. This vest may be worn or omitted, as suits the taste of the wearer. It is without sleeves but has straps; the hair plaited in two behind, and the plaits turned up, and fastened together by a diamond ring; long ear-rings, and all sorts of chains and medals, and tinkling things worn round the neck. A long, broad, colored sash, something like an officer's belt, tied behind after going twice or thrice round the waist, into which is stuck a silver cigar-case. A small colored handkerchief like a broad ribbon, crossing over the neck, is fastened in front with a brooch, the ends trimmed with silver, and going through the sash. Over all is thrown a reboso, not over the head, but thrown on like a scarf; and they wear silk stockings, or more commonly no stockings, and white satin shoes trimmed with silver.

This is on holidays. On common occasions, the dress is the same, but the materials are more common, at least the vest with silver is never worn; but the chemise is still trimmed with lace, and the shoes are satin. . . .

Christmas Eve in Puebla! The room is filled with visiters, who have come to congratulate C——n on his arrival, and a wonderfully handsome room it is, to do it justice, with chairs and sofas of scarlet stuff. But I was anxious to see *something*. As we are to leave Puebla very early, I am prohibited from going to midnight mass. I proposed the theatre, where there is to be a *Nacimiento*, a representation in figures of various events connected with the Birth of Christ; such as the Annunciation, the Holy Family, the Arrival of the Wise Men of the East, &c.

But after some deliberation, it was agreed that this would not do; so finding that there is nothing to be done, and tired of polite conversation, I betake myself to bed.

Christmas Day.

It is now about three o'clock, but I was awakened an hour ago by the sounds of the hymns which ushered in Christmas morning; and looking from the window, saw by the faint light, bands of girls dressed in white, singing in chorus through the streets.

We have just taken chocolate, and, amidst a profusion of bows and civilities from the landlord, are preparing to set off for Mexico.

LETTER THE SIXTH.

Departure from Puebla — Chirimoyas — Rio Frio — Indian Game — Black Forest — Valley of Mexico — Recollections of Tenochtitlan — Mexican Officer — Reception — Scenery — Variety of Dresses — Cheers — Storm of Rain — Entry to Mexico — Buenavista — House by day-light — Sights from the windows — Visits — Mexican Etiquette — Countess C——a — Flowers in December — Serenade — Patriotic Hymn.

MEXICO, 26th December.

WE left Puebla between four and five in the morning, as we purposely made some delay, not wishing to reach Mexico too early, and in so doing, acted contrary to the advice of Don Miguel, who was generally right in these matters. The day was very fine when we set off, though rain was predicted. Some of the gentlemen had gone to the theatre the night before, to see the *Nacimiento*, and the audience had been composed entirely of *Gentuza*, the common people, who were drinking brandy, and smoking; so it was fortunate that we had not shown our faces there.

The country was now flat, but fertile, and had on the whole more of a European look than any we had yet passed through.

At Rio Prieto, a small village where we changed horses, I found that I had been sitting very com-

fortably with my feet in a basket of chirimoyas, and that my brodequins, white gown, and cloak, had been all drenched with the milky juice, and then made black by the floor of the diligence.

With no small difficulty a trunk was brought down, and another dress procured, to the great amusement of the Indian women, who begged to know if my gown was the *last fashion*, and said it was "*muy guapa*," very pretty. Here we found good hot coffee, and it being Christmas day, every one was clean and dressed for mass.

At Rio Frio, which is about thirteen leagues from Mexico, and where there is a pretty good posada in a valley surrounded by woods, we stopped to dine. The inn is kept by a Bordelaise and her husband, who wish themselves in Bordeaux twenty times a day. In front of the house, some Indians were playing at a curious and very ancient game — a sort of swing, resembling "*El Juego de los Voladores*," "The game of the Flyers," much in vogue amongst the ancient Mexicans. Our French hostess gave us a good dinner, especially excellent potatoes, and jelly of various sorts, regaling us with plenty of stories of robbers and robberies and horrid murders all the while.

On leaving Rio Frio, the road became more hilly and covered with woods, and we shortly entered the tract known by the name of the Black Forest, a great haunt for banditti, and a beautiful specimen of forest scenery, a succession of lofty oaks, pines and cedars, with wild flowers lighting up their gloomy green. But I confess, that the impatience which I felt to see

Mexico, the idea that in a few hours we should actually be there, prevented me from enjoying the beauty of the scenery, and made the road appear interminable.

But at length we arrived at the heights looking down upon the great valley, celebrated in all parts of the world, with its frame-work of everlasting mountains, its snow-crowned volcanoes, great lakes, and fertile plains, all surrounding the favored city of Montezuma, the proudest boast of his conqueror, once of Spain's many diadems the brightest. But the day had overcast, nor is this the most favorable road for entering Mexico. The innumerable spires of the distant city were faintly seen. The volcanoes were enveloped in clouds, all but their snowy summits, which seemed like marble domes towering into the sky. But as we strained our eyes to look into the valley, it all appeared to me rather like a vision of the Past, than the actual, breathing Present. The curtain of Time seemed to roll back, and to discover to us the great panorama that burst upon the eye of Cortes when he first looked down upon the table-land; the king-loving, God-fearing conqueror, his loyalty and religion so blended after the fashion of ancient Spain, that it were hard to say which sentiment exercised over him the greater sway. The city of Tenochtitlan, standing in the midst of the five great lakes, upon verdant and flower-covered islands, a western Venice, with thousands of boats gliding swiftly along its streets, long lines of low houses, diversified by the multitudes of pyramidal temples, the Teocalli, or houses of God — canoes covering

the mirrored lakes — the lofty trees, the flowers, and the profusion of water now wanting to the landscape — the whole fertile valley enclosed by its eternal hills and snow-crowned volcanoes — what scenes of wonder and of beauty, to burst upon the eyes of these wayfaring men!

Then the beautiful gardens surrounding the city, the profusion of flowers, and fruit, and birds — the mild bronze-colored Emperor himself, advancing in the midst of his Indian nobility, with rich dress and unshod feet, to receive his unbidden and unwelcome guest — the slaves and the gold and the rich plumes, all to be laid at the feet of "His most sacred Majesty" — what pictures are called up by the recollection of the simple narrative of Cortes, and how forcibly they return to the mind, now, when after a lapse of three centuries, we behold for the first time, the city of palaces raised upon the ruins of the Indian Capital! It seemed scarcely possible that we were indeed so near the conclusion of our journey, and in the midst of so different a scene, only two months minus two days since leaving New York and stepping on board the Norma. How much land and sea we had passed over since then! How much we had seen! How many different climates, even in the space of the last four days!

But my thoughts which had wandered three centuries into the past, were soon recalled to the present, by the arrival of an officer in full uniform, at the head of his troop, who came out by order of the government, to welcome the bearer of the olive branch from ancient Spain, and had been on horse-

back since the day before, expecting our arrival. As it had begun to rain, the officer, Colonel Miguel Andrade, accepted our offer of taking shelter in the diligence. We had now a great troop galloping along with us, and had not gone far, before we perceived that in spite of the rain, and that it already began to grow dusk, there were innumerable carriages and horsemen forming an immense crowd, all coming out to welcome us. Shortly after, the diligence was stopped, and we were requested to get into a very splendid carriage, all crimson and gold, with the arms of the republic, the eagle and nopal, embroidered in gold on the roof inside, and drawn by four handsome white horses. In the midst of this immense procession of troops, carriages and horsemen, we made our entry into the city of Montezuma.

The scenery on this side of Mexico is arid and flat, and where the waters of the Lagunas, covered with their gay canoes, once surrounded the city, forming canals through its streets, we now see melancholy marshy lands, little enlivened by great flights of wild duck and water fowl. But the bleakness of the natural scenery was concealed by the gay appearance of the procession — the scarlet and gold uniforms, the bright-colored sarapes, the dresses of the gentlemen, (most I believe Spaniards) with their handsome horses, high Mexican saddles, gold embroidered *anqueras* generally of black fur, their Mexican hats ornamented with gold, richly-furred jackets, pantaloons with hanging silver buttons, stamped-leather boots, silver stirrups and graceful mangas with black or colored velvet capes.

At the gates of Mexico, the troops halted, and three enthusiastic cheers were given as the carriage entered. It was now nearly dusk, and the rain was falling in torrents, yet we met more carriages full of ladies and gentlemen which joined the others. We found that a house in the suburbs, at Buenavista, had been taken for us *provisoirement* by the kindness of the Spaniards, especially of a rich merchant who accompanied us in the carriage, Don M——l M——z del C——o; consequently we passed all through Mexico before reaching our destination, always in the midst of the crowd, on account of which and of the ill-paved streets, we went very slowly. Through the rain and the darkness, we got an occasional faint lamp-light glimpse of high buildings, churches and convents. Arrived at length, in the midst of torrents of rain, C——n got out of the carriage, and returned thanks for his reception, giving some ounces to the sergeant for the soldiers. We then entered the house, accompanied by the Mexican officer, and by a large party of Spaniards.

We found the house very good, especially considering that it had been furnished for us in eight-and-forty hours, and we also found an excellent supper smoking on the table, after doing justice to which, we took leave of our friends, and very tired, prepared for sleep.

The servants and luggage arrived late. They had been left with the diligence, under the guardianship of Don Miguel, and it appeared that the robbers had mingled with the crowd, and followed in hopes of plunder, insomuch that he had been obliged to pro-

cure two carriages, one for the servants, while into another he put the luggage, mounting in front himself to look out. Tired enough the poor man was, and drenched with rain, and we found that much of this confusion and difficulty, which was chiefly caused by the storm and darkness, would have been avoided had we left Puebla some hours sooner.

However, "All 's well that ends well." I thought of Christmas in "Merrie England," and of our family gatherings in the olden time, and as if one had not travelled enough in the body, began travelling in the mind, away to far different, and distant, and long gone-by scenes, fell asleep at length with my thoughts in Scotland, and wakened in Mexico!

By day-light we find our house very pretty, with a large garden adjoining, full of flowers, and rosebushes in the court-yard, but being all on the ground-floor, it is somewhat damp, and the weather, though beautiful, is so cool in the morning, that carpets, and I sometimes think even a *soupçon* of fire, would not be amiss. The former we shall soon procure, but there are neither chimneys nor grates, and I have no doubt a fire would be disagreeable for more than an hour or so in the morning. The house stands alone, with a large court before it, and opposite to it passes the great stone aqueduct, a magnificent work of the Spaniards, though not more so, probably, than those which supplied the ancient Tenochtitlan with water. Behind it, we see nothing but several old houses, with trees, so that we seem almost in the country. To the right is one large building, with garden and olive-ground, where the English legation formerly lived, a

palace in size, since occupied by Santa Anna, and which now belongs to Señor Perez Galvez ; a house which we shall be glad to have, if the proprietor will consent to let it.

But what most attracts our attention, are the curious and picturesque groups of figures which we see from the windows — men bronze-color, with nothing but a piece of blanket thrown round them, carrying lightly on their heads earthen basins, precisely the color of their own skin, so that they look altogether like figures of terra cotta : these basins filled with sweetmeats or white pyramids of grease *(mantequilla)*; women with rebosos, short petticoats of two colors, generally all in rags, yet with a lace border appearing on their under garment : no stockings, and dirty white satin shoes, rather shorter than their small brown feet ; gentlemen on horseback with their Mexican saddles and sarapes ; lounging *léperos*, moving bundles of rags, coming to the windows and begging with a most piteous but false-sounding whine, or lying under the arches and lazily inhaling the air and the sunshine, or sitting at the door for hours basking in the sun or under the shadow of the wall ; Indian women, with their tight petticoat of dark stuff and tangled hair, plaited with red ribbon, laying down their baskets to rest, and meanwhile deliberately *examining* the hair of their copper-colored offspring. We have enough to engage our attention for the present.

Several visiters came early — gentlemen, both Spaniards and Mexicans. Señor A——z, decidedly the ugliest man I ever beheld, with a hump on his back, and a smile of most portentous hideosity, yet cel-

ebrated for his *bonnes fortunes*; Señor de G——a, Ex-Minister of the Treasury, extremely witty and agreeable, and with some celebrity as a dramatic writer; Count C——a, formerly attached to the bed-chamber in Spain, married to a pretty Andalusian, and entirely Mexicanized, his heart where his interests are. He is very gentlemanlike and distinguished-looking, with good manners, and extremely eloquent in conversation. I hear him called "*inconsecuente*," and capricious, but he has welcomed C——n, who knew him intimately in Madrid, with all the warmth of ancient friendship.

We are told that a great serenade has been for some time in contemplation, to be given to C——n, the words, music and performance by the young Spaniards resident here.

27*th*.—A day or two must elapse before I can satisfy my curiosity by going out, while the necessary arrangements are making concerning carriage and horses, or mules, servants, &c.; our vehicles from the United States not having yet arrived, nor is it difficult to foresee, even from once passing through the streets, that only the more solid-built English carriages will stand the wear and tear of a Mexican life, and that the comparatively flimsy coaches which roll over the well-paved streets of New York, will not endure for any length of time.

Meanwhile we have constant visits, but chiefly from gentlemen and from Spaniards, for there is one piece of etiquette, entirely Mexican, nor can I imagine from whence derived, by which it is ordained that all new arrivals, whatever be their rank, foreign

Ministers not excepted, must in solemn print give notice to every family of any consideration in the capital, that they have arrived, and offer themselves and their house to their "*disposicion;*" failing in which etiquette, the newly-arrived family will remain unnoticed and unknown. Our cards to this effect are consequently being printed under the auspices of Count C——a. I have, however, received the visits of some ladies who have kindly waved this ceremony in my favor; and amongst others, from the Dowager and the young Countesses of C——a; the eldest a very distinguished woman, of great natural talent, one of the true ladies of the old school, of whom not many specimens now remain in Mexico; the other, extremely pretty, lively and amiable, a true Andalusian both in beauty and wit. The old Countess was dressed in black velvet, black blonde mantilla, diamond ear-rings and brooch — her daughter-in-law also in black, with a mantilla, and she had a pretty little daughter with her, whose eyes will certainly produce a kindling effect on the next generation.

They were both extremely kind and cordial; if there are many such persons in Mexico, we shall have no reason to complain. I hope I am not seeing the cream before the milk!

Some Mexican visits appear to me to surpass in duration all that one can imagine of a visit, rarely lasting less than one hour, and sometimes extending over a great part of the day. And gentlemen at least, arrive at no particular time. If you are going to breakfast, they go also — if to dinner, the same — if you are asleep, they wait till you awaken — if out,

they call again. An indifferent sort of man, whose name I did not even hear, arrived yesterday a little after breakfast, sat still, and walked in to a late dinner with us! These should not be called visits, but visitations, though I trust they do not often occur to that extent. An open house and an open table for your friends — which includes every passing acquaintance; these are merely Spanish habits of hospitality transplanted.

Had a visit from Señor —— and his wife, very civil and obliging people, always agreeing with each other, and with you, and with all the world, almost to the extent of Polonius to Hamlet. Our conversation reminded me of that the whole time they were here.

I have just brought from the garden a lap-full of pink roses, clove carnations and sweet pease. Rosetta could not sing here —

"For June and December will never agree."

The weather is lovely, the air fresh and clear, the sky one vast expanse of bright blue, without a single cloud. Early this morning it was cool, but now, by ten o'clock, the air is as soft and balmy as on a summer day with us.

28th. — Day of the memorable serenade. After dinner, some ladies paid me a visit, amongst others the wife and daughter of the Spanish consul, Señor M——y, who were accompanied by the sister of Count A——a. They and a few gentlemen arrived about six o'clock, and it was said that the serenade would not begin till twelve. It may be supposed

that our conversation, however agreeable it might be, would scarcely hold out that time. In fact, by nine o'clock, we were all nearly overcome by sleep, and by ten I believe we were already in a refreshing slumber, when we were awakened by the sound of crowds assembling before the door, and of carriages arriving and stopping. Not knowing who the occupants might be, we could not invite them in, which seemed very inhospitable, as the night, though fine, was cold and chilly. About eleven Count and Countess C——a arrived, and the Señora de G——a, a remarkably handsome woman, a Spaniard, looking nearly as young as her daughters—also the pretty daughters of the proprietress of this house, who was a beauty, and is married to her third husband, and a lively little talkative person, the Señora de L——n, all Spanish; and who, some on that account, and others from their husbands having been former friends of C——n's have not waited for the ceremony of receiving cards. Gradually, however, several Mexican ladies, whom we had sent out to invite, came in. Others remained in their carriages, excusing themselves on the plea of their not being *en toilette*. We had men *à discretion*, and the rooms were crowded.

About midnight, arrived a troop of Mexican soldiers, carrying torches, and a multitude of musicians, both amateur and professional, chiefly the former, and men carrying music-stands, violins, violoncellos, French horns, &c., together with an immense crowd, mingled with numbers of léperos, so that the great space in front of the house as far as the aqueduct,

and all beyond and along the street as far as we could see, was covered with people and carriages. We threw open the windows, which are on a level with the ground, with large balconies and wide iron gratings, and the scene by the torch light was very curious. The Mexican troops holding lights for the musicians; and they of various countries, Spanish, German and Mexican; the léperos with their ragged blankets and wild eyes that gleamed in the light of the torches, the ladies within and the crowd without, all formed a very amusing *spectacle*.

At length the musicians struck up in full chorus, accompanied by the whole orchestra. The voices were fine, and the instrumental music so good, I could hardly believe that almost all were amateur performers.

A hymn, which had been composed for the occasion, and of which we had received an elegantly bound copy in the morning, was particularly effective. The music was composed by Señor Retes, and the words by Senor Covo, both Spaniards. Various Overtures from the last Operas were played, and at the end of what seemed to be the first act, in the midst of deafening applause from the crowd, C——n made me return thanks from the window in beautiful impromptu Spanish! Then came shouts of "Viva la España!" "Viva Ysabel Segunda!" "Viva el Ministro de España!" Great and continued cheering. Then C——n gave in return "Viva la Republica Mexicana!" "Viva Bustamante!" and the shouting was tremendous. At last an Andalusian in the crowd shouted out "Viva todo el Mundo!"

Long live every body; which piece of wit was followed by general laughter.

After hot punch and cigars had been handed about out of doors, a necessary refreshment in this cold night, the music recommenced, and the whole ended with the national hymn of Spain, with appropriate words. A young Spanish girl, whose voice is celebrated here, was then entreated by those within, and beseeched by those without, to sing alone the Hymn composed in honor of C——n, which she naturally felt some hesitation in doing, before such an immense audience. However, she consented at last, and in a voice like a clarion, accompanied by the orchestra, sung each verse alone, joined in the chorus, by the whole crowd. I give you a copy.

Himno Patriótico que varios Españoles Residentes en México Dedican al Esmo Sr. Don A—— C—— de la B——, Ministro Plenipotenciario de S. M. C. en la República, con Motivo de su llegada á dicha Capital.

Musica del Sr. J. N. de Retes; Palabras del Sr. Dn. Juan Covo.

CORO.

Triunfamos Amigos,
Triunfamos enfin,
Y libre respira
La Patria del Ciel.

La Augusta *Cristina*
De España embeleso,
El mas tierno beso
Imprime á *Ysabel:*
Y reina, le dice
No la sobre esclavos;
Sobre Iberos bravos
Sobre un pueblo fiel.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Donde está de Carlos
La perfida hueste ?
Un rayo celeste
Polvo la tornó.
Rayo que al malvado
Hundió en el abismo
Rayo que al Carlismo
Libertad lanzó.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Al bravo Caudillo
Al bueno al valiente
Ciñamos la frente
De mirto y laurel.
Tu diestra animosa
Heroico guerrero
Tu diestra, *Espartero*
Sojuzgó al infiel.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Veranse acatadas
Nuestras santas leyes ;
Temblaran los Reyes
De España al poder.
Y el cetro de oprobrio
Si empuña un tirano
De su ínfame mano
Le harémos cær.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Salud á *Ysabela*
Salud á *Cristina*
Que el cielo destina
La patria á salvar.
Y el libre corone
La candida frente
De aquella inocente
Que juró amparar.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Y tu, Mensagero
De paz y ventura
Oye la voz pura
De nuestra lealtad.
Oye los acentos
Que al cielo elevamos
Oye cual gritamos
Patria ! Libertad !

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

Tu el simbolo digno
Serás *C——n*,
De grata reumion
De eterna Amistad
Que ya en ambos mundos
La insana discordia
Trocóse en concordia
Y fraternidad.

Triunfamos Amigos, &c.

TRANSLATION.

Patriotic Hymn which various Spaniards, resident in Mexico, Dedicate to His Excellency Señor Don A—— C—— de la B——, Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary from H. C. M. to the Republic, to celebrate his arrival in this Capital.

The music by Señor Don J. N. de Retes ; the words by Señor Don Juan Covo.

CHORUS.

Let us triumph my friends,
Let us triumph at length,
And let the country of the Cid
Breathe freely again.

The august Christina
The ornament of Spain
Imprinted the most tender kiss
On the cheek of Isabel.

And "reign," she said to her,
"Not now over slaves,
But over brave Iberians
Over a faithful people!"

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

Where is the perfidious
Army of Carlos?
A celestial thunderbolt
Has turned it to dust.
A thunderbolt which plunged
The wicked one into the abyss,
A thunberbolt which *Liberty*
Lanched against Carlism.

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

Of the brave chief,
Of the good, the valiant,
Let us gird the forehead
With myrtle and laurel.
Thy brave right hand
Heroic warrior
Thy right hand, *Espartero*
Subdued the Disloyal One.

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

Our holy laws
Will be acknowledged,
And kings will tremble
At the power of Spain.
And should a tyrant grasp
The sceptre of opprobrium,
From his infamous hand
We shall cause it to fall.

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

Health to *Isabella*
Health to *Christina*
Whom Heaven has destined
To save the country,

And may he freely crown
The white forehead
Of the innocent princess
He swore to protect.

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

And thou, Messenger
Of peace and joy,
Hear the pure voice
Of our loyalty.
Hear the accents
Which we raise to Heaven,
Hear what we cry
Country! Liberty!

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

Thou, *C——n*, shalt be
The worthy symbol
Of grateful reunion
Of eternal friendship,
Which already has changed
In both worlds
Insane Discord
Into concord and fraternity.

Let us triumph my friends, &c.

The air was rent with vivas! and bravos! as the Señorita de F—— concluded. Her voice was beautiful, and after the first moment of embarrassment, she sang with much spirit and enthusiasm. This was the finale of the serenade, and then the serenaders were invited in, and were in such numbers that the room would scarcely hold them all. More cigars, more punch, more giving of thanks. About three o'clock, the crowd began to disperse, and at length after those Spanish leave-takings, which are really no joke, had ended, Captain E——, C——n and I, all

three excessively cold and shivering, having passed the night at the open windows, consoled ourselves with hot chocolate and punch, and went to dream of sweet-sounding harmonies. Altogether, it was a scene which I would not have missed for a great deal.

The enthusiasm caused by the arrival of the first minister from Spain seems gradually to increase. The actors are to give him a "*funcion extraordinaria*," in the theatre — the matadors a bull-fight extraordinary, with fire-works. . . . . But in all this you must not suppose there is any personal compliment. It is merely intended as a mark of good will towards the first representative of the Spanish monarchy who brings from the mother country the formal acknowledgment of Mexican independence.

LETTER THE SEVENTH.

Débût in Mexico — Cathedral — Temple of the Aztecs — Congregation — Stone of sacrifices — Palace — Importunate léperos — Visit to the President — Countess C——a — Street cries — Tortilleras — *Sartor Resartus.*

I MADE my débût in Mexico by going to mass in the cathedral. We drove through the Alameda, near which we live, and admired its noble trees, flowers, and fountains, all sparkling in the sun. We met but few carriages there, an occasional gentleman on horseback, and a few solitary-looking people resting on the stone benches, also plenty of beggars, and the *forçats* in chains, watering the avenues. We passed through the Calle San Francisco, the handsomest street in Mexico, both as to shops and houses, (containing, amongst others, the richly carved but now half-ruined palace of Yturbide) and which terminates in the great square where stand the cathedral and the palace. The streets were crowded, it being a holiday; and the purity of the atmosphere, with the sun pouring down upon the bright-colored groups, and these groups so picturesque, whether of soldiers or monks, peasants or veiled ladies; the very irregularity of the buildings, the number of fine churches and old convents, and everything on so grand a scale, even though touched by the finger of time, or crush-

ed by the iron heel of revolution, that the attention is constantly kept alive, and the interest excited.

The carriage drew up in front of the cathedral, built upon the site of part of the ruins of the great temple of the Aztecs; of that pyramidal temple, constructed by *Ahuitzotli*, the sanctuary so celebrated by the Spaniards, and which comprehended with all its different edifices and sanctuaries, the ground on which the cathedral now stands, together with part of the plaza and streets adjoining.

We are told, that within its enclosure were five hundred dwellings, that its hall was built of stone and lime, and ornamented with stone serpents. We hear of its four great gates, fronting the four cardinal points, of its stone-paved court, great stone stairs, and sanctuaries dedicated to the gods of war; of the square destined for religious dances, and the colleges for the priests, and seminaries for the priestesses; of the horrible temple, whose door was an enormous serpent's mouth; of the temple of mirrors and that of shells; of the house set apart for the Emperor's prayers; of the consecrated fountains, the birds kept for sacrifice, the gardens for the holy flowers, and of the terrible towers composed of the skulls of the victims; strange mixture of the beautiful and the horrible! We are told that five thousand priests chanted night and day in the Great Temple, to the honor and in the service of the monstrous Idols, who were anointed thrice a day with the most precious perfumes, and that of these priests the most austere were clothed in black, their long hair dyed with ink, and their bodies anointed with the ashes of

burnt scorpions and spiders; their chiefs were the sons of kings.

It is remarkable, by the way, that their god of war *Mejitli*, was said to have been born of a woman, *a Holy Virgin*, who was in the service of the temple, and that when the priests having knowledge of her disgrace, would have stoned her, a voice was heard, saying: "Fear not, mother; for I shall save thy honor and my glory;" upon which, the god was born, with a shield in his left hand, an arrow in his right, a plume of green feathers on his head; his face painted blue, and his left leg adorned with feathers! Thus was his gigantic statue represented.

There were gods of the Water, of the Earth, of Night, Fire and Hell; goddesses of Flowers and of Corn; there were oblations offered of bread and flowers and jewels, but we are assured that from twenty to fifty thousand human victims were sacrificed annually in Mexico alone! That these accounts are exaggerated, even though a Bishop is among the narrators, we can scarcely doubt, but if the tenth part be the truth, let the memory of Cortes be sacred, who, with the cross stopped the shedding of innocent blood, founded the cathedral on the ruins of the temple, which had so often resounded with human groans, and in the place of these blood-smeared idols enshrined the mild form of the Virgin.

Meanwhile we entered the Christian edifice, which covers an immense space of ground, is of the gothic form, with two lofty ornamented towers, and is still immensely rich in gold, silver and jewels. A balustrade running through it, which was brought from

China, is said to be very valuable, but seems to me more curious than beautiful. It is a composition of brass and silver. Not a soul was in the sacred precincts this morning, but miserable *léperos* in rags and blankets, mingled with women in ragged *rebosos* — at least a sprinkling of ladies with mantillas was so very slight, that I do not think there were half a dozen in all. The floor is so dirty that one kneels with a feeling of horror, and an inward determination to effect as speedy a change of garments afterwards, as possible. Besides, many of my Indian neighbors were engaged in an occupation which I must leave to your imagination; in fact, relieving their heads from the pressure of the colonial system; or rather, eradicating and slaughtering the colonists, who swarm there like the emigrant Irish in the United States. I was not sorry to find myself once more in the pure air after mass; and have since been told that except on peculiar occasions, and at certain hours, few ladies perform their devotions in the cathedral. I shall learn all these particulars in time.

We saw as we passed out, the Aztec Calendar, a round stone covered with hieroglyphics, which is still preserved and fastened on the outside of the cathedral. We afterwards saw the Stone of Sacrifices, now in the court yard of the University, with a hollow in the middle, in which the victim was laid, while six priests, dressed in red, their heads adorned with plumes of green feathers, (they must have looked like macaws) with gold and green ear-rings, and blue stones in their upper lips, held him down, while the chief priest cut open his breast, threw his heart at the

feet of the idol, and afterwards put it into his mouth with a golden spoon. They then cut off his head, to make use of it in building the tower of skulls, eat some parts of him, and either burnt the rest, or threw it to the wild beasts who were maintained in the palace.

These interesting particulars occurred to us as we looked at the Stone, and we were not sorry to think that it is now more ornamental than useful.

After leaving the cathedral, C——n fastened on his orders in the carriage, as this day was appointed for his presentation to the President, and we drove to the palace, where I left him, and returned home. He was received with great etiquette, a band of music playing in the court, the President in full uniform, surrounded by all his ministers and aides-de-camp, standing before a throne, under a velvet dais, his feet upon a tabouret, the whole being probably the same as was used by the Viceroys. *Viva la Republica!* C——n made a discourse to him, and he made one in return, both of which may be found by those who are curious in these matters, in the *Diario* of the 31st December. . . . .

Whilst I am writing, a horrible lépero, with great leering eyes, is looking at me through the windows, and performing the most extraordinary series of groans, displaying at the same time a hand with two long fingers, probably the other three tied in. "Señorita! Señorita! For the love of the Most Holy Virgin! For the sake of the most pure blood of Christ! By the miraculous Conception!—" The wretch! I dare not look up, but

I feel that his eyes are fixed upon a gold watch and seals lying on the table. That is the worst of a house on the ground floor. . . . There come more of them! A paralytic woman mounted on the back of a man with a long beard. A sturdy-looking individual, who looks as if, were it not for the iron bars, he would resort to more effective measures, is holding up a *deformed foot*, which I verily believe is merely fastened back in some extraordinary way. What groans! what rags! what a chorus of whining! This concourse is probably owing to our having sent them some money yesterday. I try to take no notice, and write on as if I were deaf. I must walk out of the room, without looking behind me, and send the porter to disperse them. There are no bell-ropes in these parts. . . .

I come back again to write, hardly recovered from the start that I have just got. I had hardly written the last words, when I heard a footstep near me, and, looking up, lo! there was my friend with *the foot*, standing within a yard of me, his hand stretched out for alms! I was so frightened, that for a moment I thought of giving him my watch, to get rid of him. However, I glided past him with a few unintelligible words, and rushed to call the servants; sending him some money by the first person who came. The porter, who had not seen him pass, is now dispersing the crowd. What vociferous exclamations! A—— has come in, and drawn the curtains, and I think they are going off.

Yesterday evening, I was taken to visit the President. The palace is an immense building, contain-

ing, besides the apartments of the President and his ministers, all the chief courts of justice. It occupies one side of the square, but is no way remarkable in its architecture. At the end of every flight of steps that we mounted, we came upon lounging soldiers, in their yellow cloaks, and women in rebosos, standing about. We passed through a hall filled with soldiers, into the antechamber, where we were received by several aides-de-camp, who conducted us into a very well-furnished room, where we sat a few minutes, till an officer came to lead us into the reception-room, which is a handsome apartment, about a hundred feet long, and fitted up with crimson and gold, also well lighted. General Bustamante, now in plain clothes, gave us a very cordial reception.

He looks like a good man, with an honest, benevolent face, frank and simple in his manners, and not at all like a hero. His conversation was not brilliant, indeed I do not know ápropos to what, I suppose to the climate, but it chiefly turned on *medicine*. There cannot be a greater contrast, both in appearance and reality, than between him and Santa Anna. There is no lurking devil in his eye. All is frank, open, and unreserved. It is impossible to look in his face without believing him to be an honest and well-intentioned man. An unprincipled but clever writer, has said of him, that he has no great capacity or superior genius, but that, whether from reflection or from slowness of comprehension, he is always extremely calm in his determinations; that before entering into any project, he inquires and considers

deeply as to whether it be just or not; but that once convinced that it is or appears to be so, he sustains his ground with firmness and constancy. He adds, that it suits him better to obey than to command, for which reason he was always so devoted a servant of the Spaniards and of Yturbide.

He is said to be a devoted friend, is honest to a proverb, and personally brave, though occasionally deficient in moral energy. He is therefore an estimable man, and one who will do his duty to the best of his ability, though whether he has severity and energy sufficient for those evil days in which it is his lot to govern, may be problematical.

Having made a sufficiently long visit to His Excellency, we went to return that of the Countess C——a, who has a magnificent house, with suits of large rooms, of which the drawing-room is particularly handsome, of immense size, the walls beautifully painted, the subjects religious, and where I found one of Broadwood's finest grand pianos. But although there are cabinets inlaid with gold, fine paintings, and hundreds of rich and curious things, our European eyes are struck with numerous inconsistencies in dress, servants, &c., in all of which there is a want of keeping very remarkable. Yet this house, and the one adjoining, which also belongs to the family, are palaces in vastness, and the Countess receives me more as if I were her daughter, than a person with whom she has been acquainted but a few days.

There are an extraordinary number of street-cries in Mexico, which begin at dawn and continue till night, performed by hundreds of discordant voices,

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impossible to understand at first; but Señor —— has been giving me an explanation of them, until I begin to have some distinct idea of their meaning. At dawn you are awakened by the shrill and desponding cry of the Carbonero, the coal-men, "Carbon! Señor," which as he pronounces it, sounds like "Carbosiu!" Then the grease-man takes up the song, "Mantequilla! lard! lard! at one real and a half." "Salt beef! good salt beef!" (Cecina buena!") interrupts the butcher in a hoarse voice. "Hay cebo-o-o-o-o-o?" This is the prolonged and melancholy note of the woman who buys kitchen suet, and stops before the door. Then passes by the *cambista*, a sort of Indian she-trader or exchanger, who sings out, "Tejocotes por venas de chile?" a small fruit which she proposes exchanging for hot peppers. No harm in that.

A kind of ambulating pedler drowns the shrill treble of the Indian cry. He calls aloud upon the public to buy needles, pins, thimbles, shirt-buttons, tape, cotton-balls, small mirrors, &c. He enters the house, and is quickly surrounded by the women, young and old, offering him the tenth part of what he asks, and which, after much haggling, he accepts. Behind him stands the Indian with his tempting baskets of fruit, of which he calls out all the names, till the cook or housekeeper can resist no longer, and putting her head over the balustrade, calls him up with his bananas, and oranges, and granaditas, &c.

A sharp note of interrogation is heard, indicating something that is hot, and must be snapped up quickly before it cools. "Gorditas de horna ca-

liente?" Little fat cakes from the oven, hot?" This is in a female key, sharp and shrill. Follows the mat-seller. "Who wants mats from Puebla? mats of five yards?" These are the most matinal cries.

At mid-day the beggars begin to be particularly importunate, and their cries, and prayers, and long recitations, form a running accompaniment to the other noises. Then above all rises the cry of "Honey-cakes!" "Cheese and honey?" "Requeson and good honey?" (*Requeson* being a sort of hard curd, sold in cheeses.) Then come the dulce-men, the sellers of sweetmeats, of meringues, which are very good, and of all sorts of candy. "Caramelos de esperma! bocadillo de coco!" Then the lottery-men, the messengers of Fortune, with their shouts of "The last ticket, yet unsold, for half a real!" a tempting announcement to the lazy beggar, who finds it easier to gamble than to work, and who may have that sum hid about his rags.

Towards evening rises the cry of "Tortillas de cuajada?" "Curd-cakes?" or, "Do you take nuts?" succeeded by the night-cry of "Chestnuts hot and roasted!" and by the affectionate venders of ducks; "Ducks, oh my soul, hot ducks!" "Maize-cakes," &c., &c., &c. As the night wears away, the voices die off, to resume next morning in fresh vigor.

Tortillas, which are the common food of the people, and which are merely maize cakes mixed with a little lime, and of the form and size of what we call *scones*, I find rather good when very hot and fresh-

baked, but insipid by themselves. They have been in use all through this country since the earliest ages of its history, without any change in the manner of baking them, excepting that, for the noble Mexicans in former days, they used to be kneaded with various medicinal plants, supposed to render them more wholesome. They are considered particularly palatable with *chile*, to endure which, in the quantities in which it is eaten here, it seems to me necessary to have a throat lined with tin.

In unpacking some books to-day, I happened to take up "*Sartor Resartus*," which, by a curious coincidence, opened of itself, to my great delight, at the following passage:

"The simplest costume," observes our Professor, "which I anywhere find alluded to in history, is that used as regimental by Bolivar's cavalry, in the late Columbian wars. A square blanket, twelve feet in diagonal, is provided, (some were wont to cut off the corners, and make it circular;) in the centre a slit is effected, eighteen inches long; through this the mother-naked trooper introduces his head and neck; and so rides, shielded from all weather, and in battle from many strokes (for he rolls it about his left arm;) and not only dressed, but harnessed and draperied." Here then we find the true "Old Roman contempt of the superfluous," which seems rather to meet the approbation of the illustrious Professor Tenfelsdroch.

LETTER THE EIGHTH.

Ball in preparation — Agreeable family — Fine voices — Theatre — Smoking — Castle of Chapultepec — Viceroy Galvez — Montezuma's Cypress — Vice-Queen — Valley of Mexico — New Year's Day — Opening of Congress — Visits from the Diplomatic Corps — Poblana Dress — "Funcion extraordinaria" — Theatre — Visit to the Cathedral of Guadalupe — Divine Painting — Bishop — Beggars — Mosquitoes' Eggs.

A GREAT ball is to be given on the 8th of January, in the theatre, for the benefit of the poor, which is to be under the patronage of the most distinguished ladies of Mexico. After much deliberation amongst the patronesses, it is decided that it shall be a *bal costumé*, and I have some thoughts of going in the Poblana dress, which I before described to you. As I am told that the Señora G——a wore it at a ball in London, when her husband was minister there, I have sent my maid to learn the particulars from her.

We called to-day on a family nearly related to the C——as, and who have been already excessively kind to us; Señor A——d, who is married to a daughter of Don Francisco Tagle, a very distinguished Mexican. We found a very large, very handsome house, the walls and roof painted in the old Spanish style, which, when well executed, has an admirable effect. The lady of the house, who is

only nineteen, I took a fancy to at first sight. She is not regularly beautiful, but has lovely dark eyes and eyebrows, with fair complexion and fair hair, and an expression of the most perfect goodness, with very amiable manners. I was surprised by hearing her sing several very difficult Italian songs with great expression, and wonderful facility. She has a fine contralto, which has been cultivated; but some Spanish ballads, and little songs of the country, she sang so delightfully, and with so much good-nature and readiness, that had it not been a first visit, I should have begged her to continue during half the morning. Fine voices are said to be extremely common, as is natural in a country peopled from Spain, and the opera, while it lasted, contributed greatly to the cultivation of musical taste.

In the evening we went to the theatre. Such a theatre! dark, dirty, redolent of bad odors; the passages leading to the boxes so ill-lighted, that one is afraid in the dark to pick one's steps through them. The acting was nearly of a piece. The first actress, who is a favorite, and who dresses well, and bears a high reputation for good conduct, is perfectly wooden, and never frightened out of her proprieties in the most tragical scenes. I am sure there is not a fold deranged in her dress when she goes home. Besides, she has a most remarkable trick of pursing up her mouth in a smile, and frowning at the same time with tears in her eyes, as if personifying an April day. I should like to hear her sing

"Said a smile to a tear."

There was no applause, and half the boxes were

empty, whilst those who were there seemed merely to occupy them from the effect of habit, and because this is the only evening amusement. The prompter spoke so loud, that as

"Coming events cast their shadows before,"

every word was made known to the audience in confidence, before it came out upon the stage officially. The whole pit smoked, the galleries smoked, the boxes smoked, the prompter smoked, a long stream of smoke curling from his box, giving something oracular and Delphic to his prophecies.

"The force of *smoking* could no farther go."

The theatre is certainly unworthy of this fine city.

31*st.* — We have spent the day in visiting the castle of Chapultepec, a short league from Mexico, the most haunted by recollections of all the traditionary sites of which Mexico can boast. Could these hoary cypresses speak, what tales might they not disclose, standing there with their long gray beards, and outstretched venerable arms, century after century; already old when Montezuma was a boy, and still vigorous in the days of Bustamante! There has the last of the Aztec emperors wandered with his dark-eyed harem. Under the shade of these gigantic trees he has rested, perhaps smoked his "tobacco mingled with amber," and fallen to sleep, his dreams unhaunted by visions of the stern traveller from the far-east, whose sails even then might be within sight of the shore. In these tanks he has bathed. Here were his gardens, and his aviaries, and his fish-ponds. Through these now tangled and deserted woods, he

may have been carried by his young nobles in his open litter, under a splendid dais, stepping out upon the rich stuffs which his slaves spread before him on that green and velvet turf.

And from the very rock where the Castle stands, he may have looked out upon his fertile valley, and great capital, with its canoe-covered lakes, and outspreading villages and temples, and gardens of flowers, no care for the future darkening the bright vision.

Tradition says, that now these caves and tanks and woods are haunted by the shade of the Conqueror's Indian love, the far-famed Doña Marina, but I think she would be afraid of meeting with the wrathful spirit of the Indian emperor.

The Castle itself, modern though it be, seems like a tradition. The Viceroy Galvez, who built it, is of a by-gone race! The apartments are lonely and abandoned, the walls falling to ruin, the glass of the windows and the carved work of the doors have been sold; and, standing at this great height, exposed to every wind that blows, it is rapidly falling to decay. We were accompanied by Count C——a, and received by a Mexican governor, who rarely resides there, and who very civilly conducted us everywhere. But Chapultepec is not a *show-place*. One must go there early in the morning, when the dew is on the grass, or in the evening, when the last rays of the sun are gilding with rosy light the snowy summits of the volcanoes; and dismount from your horse, or step out of your carriage, and wander forth without guide, or object, or fixed time for return.

We set off early, passing over a fine paved road, divided by a great and solid aqueduct of nine hundred arches, one of the two great aqueducts by which fresh water is conveyed to the city, and of which the two sources are in the hill of Chapultepec, and in that of Santa Fé, at a much greater distance. When we arrived, the sleepy soldiers, who were lounging before the gates, threw them open to let the carriage enter, and we drew up in front of the great cypress, known by the name of "Montezuma's Cypress," a most stupendous tree, dark, solemn and stately, its branches unmoved as the light wind played amongst them, of most majestic height, and forty-one feet in circumference. A second cypress standing near, and of almost equal size, is even more graceful, and they, and all the noble trees which adorn these speaking solitudes, are covered with a creeping plant resembling gray moss, hanging over every branch like long gray hair, giving them a most venerable and druidical look.

We wandered through the noble avenues, and rested under the trees, and walked through the tangled shrubberies, bright with flowers and colored berries, and groped our way into the cave, and stood by the large clear tank, and spent some time in the old garden; and then got again into the carriage, that we might be dragged up the precipitous ascent on which stands the castle, the construction of which aroused the jealousy of the government against the young Count, whose taste for the picturesque had induced him to choose this elevated site for his summer palace.

The interior was never finished; yet, even as it stands, it cost the Spanish government three hundred thousand dollars. When we look at its strong military capabilities and commanding position, fortified with salient walls and parapets towards Mexico, and containing on its northern side great moats and subterranean vaults capable of holding a vast supply of provisions, the jealousy of the government and their suspicions that it was a fortress masked as a summer retreat, are accountable enough.

The Vice-Queen Galvez was celebrated for her beauty and goodness, and was universally adored in Mexico. A sister of hers, who still survives, and who paid me a visit the other day, says that her beauty chiefly consisted in the exceeding fairness of her complexion, very few *blondes* having then been seen in this part of the world.

From the terrace that runs round the Castle, the view forms the most magnificent panorama that can be imagined. The whole valley of Mexico lies stretched out as in a map; the city itself, with its innumerable churches and convents; the two great aqueducts which cross the plain; the avenues of elms and poplars which lead to the city; the villages, lakes and plains which surround it. To the north, the magnificent Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe — to the south, the villages of San Agustin, San Angel, and Tacubaya, which seem embosomed in trees, and look like an immense garden. And if in the plains below, there are many uncultivated fields and many buildings falling to ruin, yet with its glorious enclosure of lofty mountains, above which tower the two

mighty volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, the Gog and Magog of the valley, off whose giant sides great volumes of misty clouds were rolling, and with its turquoise sky forever smiling on the scene, the whole landscape, as viewed from this height, is one of nearly unparalleled beauty.

1*st January*, 1840.—New Year's Day! The birth of the young year is ushered in by no remarkable signs of festivity. More ringing of bells, more chanting of mass, gayer dresses amongst the peasants in the streets, and more carriages passing along, and the ladies within rather more dressed than apparently they usually are, when they do not intend to pay visits. In passing through the Plaza this morning, our carriage suddenly drew up, and the servants took off their hats. At the same moment, the whole population, men, women and children, venders and buyers, peasant and señora, priest and layman, dropped on their knees, a picturesque sight. Presently a coach came slowly along through the crowd, with the mysterious *Eye* painted on the panels, drawn by piebald horses, and with priests within, bearing the divine symbols. On the balconies, in the shops, in the houses and on the streets, every one knelt while it passed, the little bell giving warning of its approach.

We were then at the door of the palace, where we went this morning to see the opening of Congress, the two houses being included in this building. The House of Representatives, though not large, is handsome, and in good taste. Opposite to the presidential chair, is a full-length representation of Our Lady of Guadalupe. All round the hall, which is semi-

circular, are inscribed the names of the heroes of independence, and that of the Emperor Agustin Yturbide is placed on the right of the presidential chair, with his sword hanging on the wall; while on the left of the chief magistrate's seat there is a vacant space; perhaps destined for the name of another emperor. The multitude of priests with their large shovel-hats, and the entrance of the president in full uniform announced by music and a flourish of trumpets, and attended by his staff, rendered it as anti-republican looking an assembly as one could wish to see. The utmost decorum and tranquillity prevailed. The president made a speech in a low and rather monotonous tone, which in the diplomates seat, where we were, was scarcely audible. No ladies were in the house, myself excepted; which I am glad I was not aware of, before going, or I should perhaps have staid away.

Yesterday, I received visits from the gentlemen of the diplomatic corps, who are not in great numbers here. England, Belgium, Prussia, and the United States, are the only countries at present represented, Spain excepted. The French minister has not arrived yet, but is expected in a few days. I was not sorry to hear English spoken once more, and to meet with so gentlemanly a person as the minister who for the last fourteen years has represented our island in the Republic. His visit, and a large packet of letters just received from Paris and from the United States, have made me feel as if the distance from home were diminished by one half.

This morning a very handsome dress was for-

warded to me with the compliments of a lady whom I do not know, the wife of General ——; with a request, that if I should go to the Fancy ball as a Poblana peasant, I may wear this costume. It is a Poblana dress, and very superb; consisting of a petticoat of maroon colored merino with gold fringe, gold bands and spangles; an under petticoat embroidered and trimmed with rich lace, to come below it. The first petticoat is trimmed with gold up the sides, which are slit open, and tied up with colored ribbon. With this must be worn a chemise, richly embroidered round the neck and sleeves, and trimmed with lace; a satin vest, open in front, and embroidered in gold; a silk sash tied behind, the ends fringed with gold, and a small silk handkerchief which crosses the neck, with gold fringe. I had already another dress prepared, but I think this is the handsomer of the two.

The actors have just called to inform C——n, that their "*funcion extraordinaria*" in his honor, is to be given on the third, that a box is prepared for us, and that the play is to be Don John of Austria.[1]

4th. — Having sat through five acts last evening in the theatre, we came home very tired. The play was *awfully* long, lasting from eight o'clock till one in the morning. At the end of the first act, the Prefect and other dignitaries came round with much precipitation and carried off C——n to a large box in the centre, intended for him; for not knowing which it was, we had gone to that of the Countess C——a. The the-

[1] Translated from the French of Casimir Delavigne.

atre looked much more decent than before; being lighted up, and the boxes hung with silk draperies in honor of the occasion. The ladies also were in full dress, and the boxes crowded, so that one could scarcely recognise the house.

This morning we drove out to see the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe; C——n in one carriage with Count C——a, and the Señora C——a and I in another, driven by Señor A——d, who is a celebrated whip; the carriage open, with handsome white horses, *frisones* as they here call the northern horses, whether from England or the United States, and which are much larger than the spirited little horses of the country. As usual, we were accompanied by four armed out-riders.

We passed through miserable suburbs, ruined, dirty, and with a commingling of odors which I could boldly challenge those of Cologne to rival. After leaving the town, the road is not particularly pretty, but is for the most part, a broad, strait avenue, bounded on either side by trees.

At Guadalupe, on the hill of Tepayac, there stood in days of yore, the Temple of Tonantzin, the goddess of earth and of corn, a mild deity, who rejected human victims, and was only to be propitiated by the sacrifices of turtle-doves, swallows, pigeons, &c. She was the protectress of the Totonoqui Indians. The spacious church, which now stands at the foot of the mountain, is one of the richest in Mexico. Having put on veils, no bonnets being permitted within the precincts of a church, we entered this far-famed

sanctuary, and were dazzled by the profusion of silver with which it is ornamented.

The divine painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe, represents her in a blue cloak covered with stars, a garment of crimson and gold, her hands clasped, and her foot on a crescent, supported by a cherub. The painting is coarse, and only remarkable on account of the tradition attached to it.

We afterwards visited a small chapel, covered by a dome, built over a boiling spring, whose waters possess miraculous qualities, and bought crosses and medals which have touched the holy image, and pieces of white ribbon, marked with the measure of the Virgin's hands and feet. We climbed (albeit very warm) by a steep path to the top of the hill, where there is another chapel, from which there is a superb view of Mexico; and beside it, a sort of monument in the form of the sails of a ship, erected by a grateful Spaniard, to commemorate his escape from shipwreck, which he believed to be owing to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We then went to the village to call on the Bishop, the Ylustrisimo Señor Campos, whom we found in his canonicals, and who seems a good, little old man, but no conjuror; although I believe he had the honor of bringing up his cousin, Señor Posada, destined to be Archbishop of Mexico. We found him quietly seated in a large, simply furnished room, and apparently buried over some huge volumes, so that he was not at first aware of our entrance.

A picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe hung on the wall, which C——n having noticed, he observed that

he could not answer for its being a very faithful resemblance, as Our Lady did not appear often, not so often as people supposed. Then folding his hands, and looking down, he proceeded to recount the history of the miraculous apparition, pretty much as follows.

In 1531, ten years and four months after the conquest of Mexico, the fortunate Indian whose name was Juan Diego, and who was a native of Cuatitlan, went to the suburb of Tlaltelolco to learn the Christian doctrine which the Franciscan monks taught there. As he was passing by the mountain of Tepeyac, the Holy Virgin suddenly appeared before him and ordered him to go, in her name, to the Bishop, the Ylustrisimo D. Fr. Juan de Zumarraga, and to make known to him that she desired to have a place of worship erected, in her honor, on that spot. The next day the Indian passed by the same place, when again the Holy Virgin appeared before him, and demanded the result of his commission. Juan Diego replied, that in spite of all his endeavors, he had not been able to obtain an audience of the Bishop. "Return," said the Virgin, "and say that it is I, the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, who sends thee." Juan Diego obeyed the Divine orders, yet still the Bishop would not give him credence, merely desiring him to bring some sign or token of the Virgin's will. He returned with this message on the twelfth of December, when, for the third time, he beheld the apparition of the Virgin. She now commanded him to climb to the top of the barren rock of Tepeyac, to gather the roses which he should find there, and to

bring them to her. The humble messenger obeyed, though well knowing, that on that spot were neither flowers nor any trace of vegetation. Nevertheless, he found the roses, which he gathered and brought to the Virgin Mary, who, throwing them into his *tilma*, said, "Return; show these to the Bishop, and tell him that these are the credentials of thy mission." Juan Diego set out for the episcopal house, which stood on the ground occupied by the Hospital, now called San Juan de Dios, and when he found himself in presence of the Prelate, he unfolded his *tilma* to show him the roses, when there appeared imprinted on it, the miraculous image which has existed for more than three centuries.

When the Bishop beheld it, he was seized with astonishment and awe, and conveyed it in solemn procession to his own oratory, and shortly after this splendid church was erected in honor of the patroness of New Spain. "From all parts of the country," continued the old Bishop, "people flock in crowds to see our Lady of Guadalupe, and esteem it an honor only to obtain a sight of her. What then must be *my* happiness, who can see her most gracious Majesty every hour and every minute of the day! I would not quit Guadalupe for any other part of the world, nor for any temptation that could be held out to me;" and the pious man remained for a few minutes as if wrapt in ecstasy. That he was sincere in his assertions, there could be no doubt. As evening prayers were about to begin, we accompanied him to the Cathedral. An old woman opened the door

for us as we passed out. "Have my chocolate ready when I return," said the Bishop. "Si padrecito!" said the old woman, dropping upon her knees, in which posture she remained for some minutes. As we passed along the street, the sight of the reverend man had the same effect; all fell on their knees as he passed, precisely as if the Host were carried by, or the shock of an earthquake were felt. Arrived at the door of the Cathedral, he gave us his hand, or rather his pastoral amethyst to kiss.

The organ sounded fine as it pealed through the old Cathedral, and the setting sun poured his rays in through the Gothic windows with a rich and glowing light. The church was crowded with people of the village, but especially with *léperos*, counting their beads, and suddenly in the midst of an "Ave Maria Purisima," flinging themselves and their rags in your path with a "Por el amor de la Santisima Virgen!" and if this does not serve their purpose, they appeal to your domestic sympathies. From men they entreat relief "By the life of the Señorita." From women, "By the life of the little child!" From children it is "By the life of your mother!" And a mixture of pity and superstitious feeling makes most people, women at least, draw out their purses.

Count C——a has promised to send me to-morrow a box of mosquitoes' eggs, of which tortillas are made, which are considered a great delicacy. Considering mosquitoes as small winged *cannibals*, I was rather shocked at the idea, but they pretend that

these which are from the Laguna, are a superior race of creatures, which do not sting. In fact the Spanish historians mention that the Indians used to eat bread made of the eggs which the fly called *agayacatl* laid on the rushes of the lakes, and which they (the Spaniards) found very palatable.

LETTER THE NINTH.

Visits from Spaniards — Visit from the President — Disquisition — Poblana Dress — Bernardo the Matador — Bull-Fight extraordinary — Plaza de Toros — Fireworks — Portrait of C——n — Fancy-Ball — Dress — Costume of the Patronesses — Beauty in Mexico — Doctor's Visit — Cards of *faire part* — Marquesa de San Roman — Toilette in Morning Visits of Ceremony — Attempt at Robbery — Murder of a Consul — La Güera Rodriguez — Dr. Plan — M. de Humboldt — Anecdote — Former Customs.

5th January.

YESTERDAY (Sunday) a great day here for visiting after mass is over. We had a concourse of Spaniards, all of whom seemed anxious to know whether or not I intended to wear a Poblana dress at the fancy ball, and seemed wonderfully interested about it. Two young ladies or women of Puebla, introduced by Señor —— came to proffer their services in giving me all the necessary particulars, and dressed the hair of Josefa, a little Mexican girl, to shew me how it should be arranged ; mentioned several things still wanting, and told me that every one was much pleased at the idea of my going in a Poblana dress. I was rather surprised that *every one* should trouble themselves about it. About twelve o'clock the president, in full uniform, attended by his aides-de-camp, paid me a visit, and sat about half an hour, very

amiable, as usual. Shortly after came more visits, and just as we supposed they were all concluded, and were going to dinner, we were told that the secretary of state, the ministers of war and of the interior, and others, were in the drawing-room. And what do you think was the purport of their visit? To adjure me, by all that was most alarming, to discard the idea of making my appearance in a Poblana dress! They assured us that Poblanas generally were *femmes de rien*, that they wore no stockings, and that the wife of the Spanish minister should by no means assume, even for one evening, such a costume. I brought in my dresses, showed their length and their propriety, but in vain; and, in fact, as to their being in the right, there could be no doubt, and nothing but a kind motive could have induced them to take this trouble; so I yielded with a good grace, and thanked the cabinet council for their timely warning, though fearing, that in this land of procrastination, it would be difficult to procure another dress for the fancy-ball; for you must know, that our luggage is still toiling its weary way, on the backs of mules, from Vera Cruz to the capital. They had scarcely gone, when Señor —— brought a message from several of the principal ladies here, whom we do not even know, and who had requested, that as a stranger, I should be informed of the reasons which rendered the Poblana dress objectionable in this country, especially on any public occasion like this ball. I was really thankful for my escape.

Just as I was dressing for dinner, a note was brought, marked *reservada* (private) the contents of

which appeared to me more odd than pleasant. I have since heard, however, that the writer, Don José Arnaiz, is an old man, and a sort of privileged character, who interferes in everything, whether it concerns him or not. I translate it for your benefit.

"The dress of a Poblana is that of a woman of no character. The lady of the Spanish minister is a *lady* in every sense of the word. However much she may have compromised herself, she ought neither to go as a Poblana, nor in any other character but her own. So says to the Señor de C——n, José Arnaiz, who esteems him as much as possible."

6th. — Early this morning, this being the day of the "bull-fight extraordinary," placards were put up, as I understand, on all the corners of the street, announcing it, accompanied by a portrait of C——n! Count C——a came soon after breakfast, accompanied by Bernardo, the first matador, whom he brought to present to us. I send you the white satin note of invitation, with its silver lace and tassels, to show you how beautifully they can get up such things here. The matador is a handsome but heavy-looking man, though said to be active and skilful. Tomorrow I shall write you an account of my *first bull-fight.*

7th. — Yesterday, towards the afternoon, there were great fears of rain, which would have caused a postponement of the combat; however, the day cleared up, the bulls little knowing how much their fate depended upon the clouds. A box in the centre, with a carpet and a silver lamp, had been prepared for us, but we went with our friends, the

C——as, into their box adjoining. The scene, to me especially, who have not seen the magnificence of the Madrid arena, was animating and brilliant in the highest degree. Fancy an immense amphitheatre with four great tiers of boxes, and a range of uncovered seats in front; the whole crowded almost to suffocation; the boxes filled with ladies in full dress, and the seats below by gaily dressed and most enthusiastic spectators — two military bands of music, playing beautiful airs from the operas; an extraordinary variety of brilliant costumes, all lighted up by the eternally deep, blue sky; ladies and peasants, and officers in full uniform, and you may conceive that it must have been altogether a varied and curious spectacle.

About half past six, a flourish of trumpets announced the president, who came in uniform with his staff, and took his seat to the music of "Guerra! Guerra! I bellici trombi." Shortly after the matadors and picadors, the former on foot, the latter on horseback, made their entry, saluting all round the arena, and were received with loud cheering.

Bernardo's dress of blue and silver was very superb, and cost him five hundred dollars. The signal was given — the gates were thrown open, and a bull sprang into the arena; not a great, fierce-looking animal, as they are in Spain, but a small, angry, wild-looking beast, with a troubled eye.

"Thrice sounds the clarion; lo! the signal falls,
The den expands, and expectation mute
Gapes round the silent circle's peopled walls.
Bounds with one lashing spring the mighty brute,

And, wildly staring, spurns, with sounding foot
The sand, nor blindly rushes on his foe;
Here, there, he points his threatening front, to suit
His first attack, wide waving to and fro
His angry tail; red rolls his eye's dilated glow."

A picture equally correct and poetical. That first *pose* of the bull is superb! Pasta, in her Medea, did not surpass it. Meanwhile the matadors and the *banderilleros* shook their colored scarfs at him — the picadors poked at him with their lances. He rushed at the first, and tossed up the scarfs which they threw at him, while they sprung over the arena; galloped after the others, sticking the horses, so that along with their riders they occasionally rolled in the dust; both, however, almost instantly recovering their equilibrium, in which there is no time to be lost. Then the matadors would throw fireworks, crackers adorned with streaming ribbons, which stuck on his horns, and, as he tossed his head, enveloped him in a blaze of fire. Occasionally the picador would catch hold of the bull's tail, and passing it under his own right leg, wheel his horse round, force the bull to gallop backwards, and throw him on his face.

Maddened with pain, streaming with blood, stuck full of darts, and covered with fireworks, the unfortunate beast went galloping round and round, plunging blindly at man and horse, and frequently trying to leap the barrier, but driven back by the waving hats and shouting of the crowd. At last, as he stood at bay, and nearly exhausted, the matador ran up and gave him the mortal blow, considered a peculiar proof of skill. The bull stopped, as if he felt that his hour

were come, staggered, made a few plunges at nothing, and fell. A finishing stroke, and the bull expired.

The trumpets sounded, the music played. Four horses galloped in tied to a yoke, to which the bull was fastened, and swiftly dragged out of the arena. This last part had a fine effect, reminding one of a Roman sacrifice. In a similar manner, eight bulls were done to death. The scene is altogether fine, the address amusing, but the wounding and tormenting of the bull is sickening, and as here, the tips of his horns are blunted, one has more sympathy with him than with his human adversaries. It cannot be good to accustom a people to such bloody sights.

Yet let me confess, that though at first I covered my face and could not look, little by little I grew so much interested in the scene, that I could not take my eyes off it, and I can easily understand the pleasure taken in these barbarous diversions, by those accustomed to them from childhood.

The bull-fight having terminated amidst loud and prolonged cheering from the crowd, a tree of fireworks, erected in the midst of the arena, was lighted, and amidst a blaze of colored light, appeared, first the Arms of the Republic, the Eagle and Nopal; and above, a full-length portrait of C——n! represented by a figure in a blue and silver uniform. Down fell the Mexican eagle with a crash at his feet, while he remained burning brightly, and lighted up by fireworks, in the midst of tremendous shouts and cheers. Thus terminated this "*funcion extraordinaria;*" and when all was over, we went to dine at

Countess C——a's, had some music in the evening, and afterwards returned home tolerably tired.

10*th.* — The fancy-ball took place last evening in the theatre, and although, owing either to the change of climate, or to the dampness of the house, I have been obliged to keep my room since the day of the bull-fight, and to decline a pleasant dinner at the English Minister's, I thought it advisable to make my appearance there. Having discarded the costume of the light-headed Poblanas, I adopted that of a virtuous Roman Contadina, simple enough to be run up in one day; a white skirt, red boddice with blue ribbons, and lace veil put on square behind; àpropos to which head-dress, it is very common amongst the Indians to wear a piece of stuff folded square, and laid flat upon the head, in this Italian fashion; and as it is not fastened, I cannot imagine how they trot along, without letting it fall.

We went to the theatre about eleven, and found the *entrée*, though crowded with carriages, very quiet and orderly. The *coup d'œil* on entering was extremely gay, and certainly very amusing. The ball, given for the benefit of the poor, was under the patronage of the ladies C——a, G——a, Guer——a, and others, but such was the original dirtiness and bad condition of the theatre, that to make it decent, they had expended nearly all the proceeds. As it was, and considering the various drawbacks, the arrangements were very good. Handsome lustres had superseded the lanterns with their tallow candles, the boxes were hung with bright silk draperies, and a canopy of the same drawn up in the form of a tent,

covered the whole ball-room. The orchestra also was tolerably good. The boxes were filled with ladies, presenting an endless succession of China crape shawls of every color and variety, and a monotony of diamond ear-rings; while in the theatre itself, if ever a ball might be termed a fancy-ball, this was that ball. Of Swiss peasants, Scotch peasants, and all manner of peasants there were a goodly assortment; as also of Turks, Highlanders, and men in plain clothes. But being public, it was not, of course, select, and amongst many well-dressed people, there were hundreds who, assuming no particular character, had exerted their imagination to appear merely fanciful, and had succeeded. One, for example, would have a scarlet satin petticoat, and over it a pink satin robe, with scarlet ribbons to match. Another, a short blue satin dress, beneath which appeared a handsome purple satin petticoat; the whole trimmed with yellow bows. They looked like the signs of the zodiac. All had diamonds and pearls; old and young, and middle-aged; including little children, of whom there were many.

The lady-patronesses were very elegant. The Señora de Gu——a, wore a head-dress in the form of a net, entirely composed of large pearls and diamonds; in itself a fortune. The Señora de C——a, as Madame de la Valliére, in black velvet and diamonds, looking pretty, as usual, but the cold of the house obliged her to muffle up in furs and böas, and so to hide her dress. The Señora de G——a, as Mary, Queen of Scots, in black velvet and pearls, with a splendid diamond necklace, was extremely

handsome; she wore a cap, introduced by the Albini, in the character of the Scottish Queen, but which, though pretty in itself, is a complete deviation from the beautiful simplicity of the real Queen-Mary cap. She certainly looked as if she had arrived at her prime without knowing Fotheringay.

Various ladies were introduced to me, who are only waiting to receive our cards of *faire part*, before they call. Amongst the girls, the best dresses that I observed were the Señoritas de F——d, the one handsome, with the figure and face of a Spanish peasant; the other much more graceful and intelligent-looking, though with less actual beauty. However, so many of the most fashionable people were in their boxes, that I am told this is not a good occasion on which to judge of the beauty or style of toilette of the Mexican women; besides which, these fancy balls being uncommon, they would probably look better in their usual costume. Upon the whole, I saw few striking beauties, little grace, and very little good dancing. There was too much velvet and satin, and the dresses were too much loaded. The diamonds, though superb, were frequently ill-set. The dresses, compared with the actual fashion, were absurdly short, and the feet, naturally small, were squeezed into shoes still smaller, which is destructive to grace, whether in walking or dancing.

I saw many superb pairs of eyes, and beautiful hands and arms, perfect models for a sculptor, the hands especially; and very few good complexions.

There was a young gentleman pointed out to me, as being in the costume of a Highlander! How I

wished that Sir William Cumming, Macleod of Macleod, or some veritable Highland chieftain could suddenly have appeared to annihilate him, and show the people here what the dress really is! There were various unfortunate children, bundled up in long satin or velvet dresses, covered with blonde and jewels, and with artificial flowers in their hair.

The room was excessively cold, nor was the ancient odor of the theatre entirely obliterated; nor indeed do I think that all the perfumes of Arabia would overpower it. Having walked about, and admired all the varieties of fancy costumes, I, being nearly frozen, went to the Countess C——a's box on the pit tier, and enveloped myself in a cloak. They pointed out the most distinguished persons in the boxes, amongst others the family of the E——s, who seem very handsome, with brilliant colors and fine teeth. We remained until three in the morning and declined all offers of refreshment, though, after all, a cup of hot chocolate would not have been amiss. There was supper somewhere, but I believe attended only by gentlemen. I had the satisfaction, in passing out, to see numerous ladies on their partners' arms, and all bedizened as they were with finery, stop under the lamps, and light their cigars, — cool and pretty.

16*th.* — I have passed nearly a week in a slight fever; shivering and hot. I was attended by a doctor of the country, who seems the most harmless creature imaginable. Every day he felt my pulse, and gave me some little innocent mixture. But what he especially gave me, was a lesson in polite conver-

sation. Every day, we had the following dialogue, as he rose to take leave.

"Madam! (this by the bed-side) I am at your service."

"Many thanks, sir."

"Madam! (this at the foot of the bed) know me for your most humble servant."

"Good morning, sir."

"Madam! (here he stopped beside a table) I kiss your feet."

"Sir, I kiss your hand."

"Madam! (this near the door) my poor house, and all in it, myself, though useless, all I have, is yours."

"Many thanks, sir."

He turns round and opens the door, again turning round as he does so,

"Adieu, Madam! your servant."

"Adieu, sir."

He goes out, partly re-opens the door, and puts in his head,

"Good morning, Madam!"

This civility, so lengthened out, as if parting were such "sweet sorrow," between doctor and patient, seems rather misplaced. It is here considered more polite to say Señorita than Señora, even to married women, and the lady of the house is generally called by her servants, "La Niña," the little girl, even though she be over eighty. This last custom is still more common in Havana, where the old negresses, who have always lived in the family, and are accustomed to call their young mistress by this name, never change, whatever be her age.

I have received a packet of letters which have done me more good than the old doctor's visits. The captain left us yesterday, and took charge of a box of chocolate stamped with various figures, and of some curious *dulces* for you. Our cards, giving the Mexicans the tardy information of our arrival, were sent out some days ago. I copy one, that you may have a specimen of the style, which looks for all the world like that of a shop-advertisement, purporting that Don —— makes wigs, dresses hair, and so forth, while Doña —— washes lace, and does up fine linen.

"Don A—— C—— de la B——, Enviado Extraordinario y Ministro Plenipotenciario de S. M. C. cerca de la Republica Mexicana; y su Esposa, Doña F—— E—— C—— de la B——; Participan á v su Llegada á este Capital, y se ofrecen á su disposicion, en la Plazuela de Buenavista, No. 2." [1]

18*th*. — For these last few days, our rooms have been filled with visiters, and my eyes are scarcely yet accustomed to the display of diamonds and pearls, silks, satins, blondes and velvets, in which the ladies have paid their first visits of etiquette. A few of the dresses I shall record for your benefit, not as being richer than the others, but that I happen to recollect them best. — The Marquesa de San Roman, an old lady who has travelled a great deal in Europe, and is

[1] Don A—— C—— de la B——, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from H. C. M.; and his Lady, Doña F—— E—— C—— de la B——; Inform you of their arrival in this Capital, and put themselves at your disposal, in the street of Buenavista — No 2.

very distinguished for talents and information. She has the Grand Cross of Maria Louisa of Spain, is of a noble Venetian family, and Aunt to the Duke of Canizzaro. Her dress was a very rich black Genoa velvet, black blonde mantilla, and a very splendid parure of diamonds. She seems in exceedingly delicate health. She and her contemporaries are fast fading away, the last records of the days of Vice-royalty. In their place a new race have started up, whose manners and appearance have little of the *vieille cour* about them; chiefly, it is said, wives of military men, sprung from the hot-beds of the Revolutions, ignorant and full of pretension as *parvenus* who have risen by chance and not by merit, must be. I continue my list after the fashion of the Court Journal.

Countess de S——o. Under dress of rich violet satin, gown of black blonde, mantilla of black blonde, diamond ear-rings, five or six large diamond brooches fastening the mantilla, necklace of large pearls and diamond sévigné. The Señora S——. Dress of white satin, gown of white blonde, white blonde mantilla, pearls, diamonds, and white satin shoes. Madame S——r, black velvet dress, white blonde mantilla, pearls, diamonds, short sleeves and white satin shoes. The Señora de A——d. Fawn-colored satin dress, black blonde mantilla, diamonds, and black satin shoes.

The Señora B——a, the wife of a General, extremely rich, and who has the handsomest house in Mexico. Dress of purple velvet, embroidered all over with flowers of white silk, short sleeves, and

embroidered corsage; white satin shoes and *bas á jour*; a deep flounce of Mechlin appearing below the velvet dress, which was short. A mantilla of black blonde, fastened by three diamond aigrettes. Diamond ear-rings of extraordinary size. A diamond necklace of immense value, and beautifully set. A necklace of pear pearls, valued at twenty thousand dollars. A diamond sévigné. A gold chain going three times round the neck, and touching the knees. On every finger two diamond rings, like little watches. As no other dress was equally magnificent, with her I conclude my description, only observing that no Mexican lady has yet paid me her first morning visit without diamonds. They have few opportunities for displaying their jewels, so that were it not on the occasion of some such morning visit of etiquette, the diamonds would lie in their cases, wasting their serene rays in darkness.

Last night an attempt was made to break into the house, but our fine little bull-dog Hercules, a present from Señor A——d, kept his ground so well, and barked so furiously, that the servants were awakened, even the porter, the soundest slumberer amongst them; and the robbers escaped without doing further mischief than inflicting a severe wound on the poor animal's paw, which has made him for the present quite lame.

Apropos to which matters, a most cruel murder, of which I have just been hearing the particulars, was committed not very long ago, in this neighborhood, upon Mr. M——, the Swiss Consul. He was also a leather-merchant, and one morning having sent out

his porter on some commission, a carriage drove up to the door, and three gentlemen presented themselves to Mr. M——, requesting to speak to him on business. He begged them to walk in ; and there entered a general in uniform, a younger officer, and a monk. Mr. M—— requested to be informed of their business, when suddenly the general, seizing hold of him, whilst the others went to secure the door, exclaimed, " we have not come to hear about your goods, we want your money." The poor man, astounded at perceiving the nature of his customers, assured them he kept but little money in the house, but proceeded instantly to open his private drawers, and empty their contents, amounting, in fact, to a trifle of some few hundred dollars. Finding that he had indeed no more to give them, they prepared to depart, when the *monk* said, " we must kill him, or he will recognise us." " No," said the officers, " Leave him, and come along. There is no danger." " Go on," said the monk, " I follow ;" and, turning back, stabbed the Consul to the heart. The three then reëntered the carriage, and drove off at full speed. A few minutes afterwards the porter returning, found his master bathed in blood, and rushing out to a neighboring gambling-house, gave the alarm. Several gentlemen ran to his assistance, but he died an hour after, having given all the particulars of the dress and appearance of his murderers, and that of their carriage. By these tokens they were soon afterwards discovered, and, by the energy of the Governor, then Count C——a, they were arrested and hanged upon the trees in front of our house,

together with a *real* Mexican Colonel, who had kindly lent the ruffians his carriage for the occasion. It is seldom that crime here meets with so prompt a punishment.

Our friend, Count C——a, when Governor of Mexico, was celebrated for his energy in "*el persiguimiento de los ladrones*," (persecuting the robbers,) as it is called. It is said that upon one occasion his zeal carried him rather far. Various robberies having been committed in the city, he had received a hint from the government, that the escape of the perpetrators was considered by them as a proof that he had grown lukewarm in the public service. A few days afterwards, riding in the streets, he perceived a notorious robber, who, the moment he observed himself recognised, darted down another street with the swiftness of an arrow. The Governor pursued him on horseback; the robber made all speed towards the Square, and rushed into the sanctuary of the Cathedral. The Count galloped in after him, and dragged him from his place of refuge near the altar. This violation of the church's sanctity was, of course, severely reprimanded, but, as the Governor remarked, they could no longer accuse him of want of zeal in the discharge of his duty.

He took as his porter the captain of a gang of robbers, ordering him to stand at the door, and to seize any of his former acquaintances who might pass, his own pardon depending on his conduct in this respect. Riding out one day to his country place, with his lady, this man accompanying them as

a servant, they were overtaken by a messenger, who desired the return of the Count to the city, upon some urgent and important business. It was already dusk, yet the Count, trusting to the honor of the robber, ordered him to conduct his lady to the Hacienda, and she alone on horseback, with this alarming guide, performed her journey in safety.

Before I conclude this letter, I must tell you that I received a visit this morning from a very remarkable character, well known here by the name of *La Güera* (the fair) *Rodriguez*, said to have been many years ago celebrated by Humboldt as the most beautiful woman he had seen in the whole course of his travels. Considering the lapse of time which has passed since that distinguished traveller visited these parts, I was almost astonished when her card was sent up with a request for admission, and still more so to find that in spite of years and of the furrows which it pleases Time to plough in the loveliest faces, La Güera retains a profusion of fair curls without one gray hair, a set of beautiful white teeth, very fine eyes, and great vivacity.

Her sister, the Marquesa de Juluapa, lately dead, is said to have been also a woman of great talent and extraordinary conversational powers; she is another of the ancient noblesse who has dropped off. The physician who attended her in her last illness, a Frenchman of the name of Plan, in great repute here, has sent in a bill to her executors of ten thousand dollars, which, although it does not excite any great astonishment, the family refuse to pay, and there is a lawsuit in consequence. The extortions of medical

men in Mexico, especially of foreign physicians, have arrived at such a height, that a person of moderate fortune must hesitate before putting himself into their hands.[1] A rich old lady in delicate health, and with no particular complaint, is a surer fund for them than a silver mine.

I found La Güera very agreeable, and a perfect living chronicle. She is married to her third husband, and had three daughters, all celebrated beauties; the Countess de Regla, who died in New York, and was buried in the cathedral there; the Marquesa de Guadalupe, also dead, and the Marquesa de A——a, now a handsome widow. We spoke of Humboldt, and talking of herself as of a third person, she related to me all the particulars of his first visit, and his admiration of her; that she was then very young, though married, and the mother of two children, and that when he came to visit her mother, she was sitting sewing in a corner where the Baron did not perceive her; until talking very earnestly on the subject of cochineal, he inquired if he could visit a certain district where there was a plantation of nopals. "To be sure," said La Güera from her corner; "we can take M. de Humboldt there;" whereupon he first perceiving her, stood amazed, and at length exclaimed, "*Valgame Dios!* who is that girl?" Afterwards he was constantly with her, and more captiva-

[1] The Mexican Government has since taken this matter into consideration, and is making regulations which render it necessary for a medical man to possess a certain degree of knowledge, and to have resided a specified time in the city before he is permitted to practise; they are also occupied in fixing a certain sum for medical attendance.

ted it is said by her wit than by her beauty; considering her a sort of western Madame de Stäel; all which leads me to suspect that the grave traveller was considerably under the influence of her fascinations, and that neither mines nor mountains, geography nor geology, petrified shells nor *alpenkalkstein*, had occupied him to the exclusion of a slight *stratum* of flirtation. It is a comfort to think that "sometimes even the great Humboldt nods."

One of La Güera's stories is too original to be lost. A lady of high rank having died in Mexico, her relatives undertook to commit her to her last resting-place, habited according to the then prevailing fashion, in her most magnificent dress, that which she had worn at her wedding. This dress was a wonder of luxury, even in Mexico. It was entirely composed of the finest lace, and the flounces were made of a species of point which cost fifty dollars a *vara*, (the Mexican yard.) Its equal was unknown. It was also ornamented and looped up at certain intervals with bows of ribbon very richly embroidered in gold. In this dress, the Condesa de —— was laid in her coffin, thousands of dear friends crowding to view her beautiful *costume de mort*, and at length she was placed in her tomb, the key of which was entrusted to the sacristan.

From the tomb to the opera is a very abrupt transition; nevertheless, both have a share in this story. A company of French dancers appeared in Mexico, a twentieth-rate ballet, and the chief danseuse was a little French damsel, remarkable for the shortness of her robes, her coquetry, and her astonishing pirou-

ettes. On the night of a favorite ballet, Mademoiselle Pauline made her *entrée* in a succession of pirouettes, and poising on her toe, looked round for approbation, when a sudden thrill of horror, accompanied by a murmur of indignation, pervaded the assembly. Mademoiselle Pauline was equipped in the very dress in which the defunct countess had been buried! Lace, point flounces, gold ribbons; impossible to mistake it. Hardly had the curtain dropped, when the little danseuse found herself surrounded by competent authorities, questioning her as to where and how she had obtained her dress. She replied that she had bought it at an extravagant price from a French *modiste* in the city. She had rifled no tomb, but honestly paid down golden ounces, in exchange for her lawful property. To the modiste's went the officers of justice. She also pleaded innocent. She had bought it of a man who had brought it to her for sale, and had paid him much more than *á poids d'or*, as indeed it was worth. By dint of further investigation, the man was identified, and proved to be the sacristan of San ——. Short-sighted sacristan! He was arrested and thrown into prison, and one benefit resulted from his cupidity, since in order to avoid throwing temptation in the way of future sacristans, it became the custom, after the body had lain in state for some time in magnificent robes, to substitute a plain dress previous to placing the coffin in the vault. A poor vanity after all.

I was told by a lady here, that on the death of her grandchild, he was not only enveloped in rich lace, but the diamonds of three Condesas and four Mar-

quesas were collected together and put on him, necklaces, bracelets, rings, brooches and tiaras, to the value of several hundred thousand dollars. The street was hung with draperies, and a band of music played, whilst he was visited by all the titled relatives of the family in his dead splendor, poor little baby! Yet his mother mourned for him as for all her blighted hopes, and the last scion of a noble house. Grief shows itself in different ways; yet one might think that when it seeks consolation in display, it must be less profound than when it shuns it.

LETTER THE TENTH.

San Fernando — House of Perez de Galvez — A removal — Size of the Houses — Old Monastery — View by Sunset — Evening Visits — Mexican Etiquette — A Night-view from the Azotea — Tacubaya — Magueys — Making of Pulque — Organos and Nopal — Environs of Mexico — Miracle — Hacienda — View from the Countess C——a's House — Arzobispado — Anecdote — Comparative view of Beauty — Indians — Rancheritas — Mexican Cordiality — Masses for the Dead — San Augustin — Form of Invitation — Death of a Senator — A Mistake.

San Fernando, 25th February.

We have been engaged for some time past in the disagreeable occupations, first of finding, then of furnishing, and lastly of entering into a new house. We were very anxious to hire that of the Marquesa de Juluapa, which is pretty, well situated, and has a garden; but the agent, after making us wait for his decision more than a fortnight, informed us that he had determined to sell it. House-rent is extremely high; nothing tolerable to be had under two thousand five hundred dollars per annum, unfurnished. There is also an extraordinary custom of paying a sum called *traspaso*, sometimes to the amount of fourteen thousand dollars, taking your chance of having the money repaid you by the next person who takes the house. We next endeavored to procure a house not far from our present residence, a palace in fact, which I mentioned to you before as having been occupied at one

time by Santa Anna, and at another by the English Legation, but the present proprietor cannot be prevailed upon to let it. It has a beautiful garden and olive ground, but is not a very secure abode, except with a guard of soldiers. We at length came to the determination of taking up our quarters here. It is a handsome new house, built by General G——, and has the fault of being only too large. Built in a square, like all Mexican houses, the ground floor, which has a stone-paved court, with a fountain in the middle, contains about twenty rooms, besides outhouses, coach-house, stables, pigeon-house, garden-house, &c. The second story, where the principal apartments are, the first floor being chiefly occupied by servants, has the same number of rooms, with coal-room, wood-room, bath-room, and water everywhere, in the court below, in the garden, and on the azotea, which is very spacious, and where, were the house our own, we might build a *mirador*, and otherwise ornament it; but to build for another is too heroic. The great defect in all these houses is their want of finish; the great doors that will not shut properly, and the great windows down to the ground, which in the rainy season will certainly admit water; making these residences appear something like a cross-breed between a palace and a barn; the splendor of the one, the discomfort of the other. I will not inflict upon you the details of all our petty annoyances caused by procrastinating tradesmen. Suffice it to say, that the Mexican *mañana* (to-morrow) if properly translated, means *never*. As to prices, I conclude we pay for being foreigners and diplomates,

and will not believe in a first experience. However, we are settled at last, and find the air here much purer than in the heart of the city, while the maladies and epidemics so common there, are here almost unknown. Behind this house is a very small garden, bounded on one side by the great wall which encloses the orchard of the old monastery of San Fernando; within whose vast precincts only seven or eight monks now linger. It is an immense building, old and gray and time-worn, with church adjoining, and spacious lands appertaining to it. At all times it is picturesque, but by moonlight or sunset, it forms a most olden-time vision.

At that hour, standing alone in the high-walled garden, when the convent bells are tolling, and the convent itself, with its iron-barred, gothic windows, and its gray-green olive trees that look so unreal and lifeless, is tinged by the last rays of the sun, the whole seems like a vision, or a half-remembered sketch, or a memory of romance.

Then the sun sets behind the snow-crowned mountains with a bright fiery red, covering their majestic sides with a rosy glow, while great black clouds come sailing along like the wings of night; and then is the hour for remembering that this is Mexico, and in spite of all the evils that have fallen over it, the memory of the romantic past hovers there still. But the dark clouds sail on, and envelop the crimson tints yet lingering and blushing on the lofty mountains, and like monstrous night-birds brood there in silent watch, and gradually the whole landscape; — mountains and sky, convent and olive trees, look gray

and sad, and seem to melt away in the dim twilight.

Then the bright moon rises, and flings her silver veil over the mountains, and lights up the plains, glittering and quivering upon the old gray stones, and a sound of military music is heard in the distance, far and faint. And all the bells are tolling; from old San Fernando that repeats himself like a sexagenarian; from the towers of the cathedral, from many a distant church and convent; and above the rumbling of carriages and the hum of the city, are heard the notes of a hymn, now rising, now falling on the ear, as a religious procession passes along to some neighboring temple. But it grows late — a carriage enters the court-yard — a visit. There is no romance here. Men and women are the same everywhere, whether enveloped in the graceful mantilla, or wearing *Herbault's last*, whether wrapt in Spanish cloak, or Mexican sarape, or Scottish plaid. The manners of the ladies here are extremely kind, but Spanish etiquette and compliments are beyond measure tiresome. After having embraced each lady who enters, according to the fashion, which after all seems cordial to say the least of it, and seated the lady of most consequence on the right side of the sofa, a point of great importance, the following dialogue is *de rigueur*. "How are you? Are you well?" "At your service, and you?" "Without novelty, (sin novedad) at your service." "I am rejoiced, and how are you, Señora?" "At your disposal, and you?" "A thousand thanks, and the Señor?" "At your service, without novelty," &c.,

&c., &c., besides, before sitting down, there is "Pray be seated." "Pass first, Señorita." "No, madam, pray pass first." "*Vaya*, well, to oblige you, without further ceremony; I dislike compliments and etiquette." And it is a fact that there is no real etiquette, but the most perfect *laissez aller* in the world. All these are mere words, tokens of good will. If it is in the morning, there is the additional question of "How have you passed the night?" And the answer, "In your service." Even in Mexico, the weather affords a legitimate opening for a conversational battery, but this chiefly when it rains or looks dull, which, occasioning surprise, gives rise to observation. Besides, a slight change in the degree of heat or cold which we would not observe, they comment upon.

The visit over, the ladies reëmbrace, the lady of the house following her guests to the top of the staircase, and again compliments are given and received. "Madam, you know that my house is at your disposal." "A thousand thanks, madam. Mine is at your's, and though useless, know me for your servant, and command me in everything that you may desire." "Adieu, I hope you may pass a good night," &c. &c. &c. At the bottom of the first landing-place, the visiters again turn round to catch the eye of the lady of the house, and the adieus are repeated. All this, which struck me at first, already appears quite natural, and would scarce be worth mentioning, but as affording a contrast to our slight and indifferent manner of receiving and taking leave of our guests. All the ladies address each other,

and are addressed by gentlemen, by their christian names, and those who have paid me more than one or two visits, use the same familiar mode of address to me. Amongst women I rather like this, but it somewhat startles my ideas of the fitness of things to hear a young man address a married woman, as Maria, Antonia, Anita, &c. However, things must be taken as they are meant, and as no familiarity is intended, none should be supposed. . . . .

But these visiters are gone, and into the open court the consolatory moon is shining. All clouds have passed away, and the blue of the sky is so blue, as to dazzle the eyes even in the moonlight. Each star shines out, bright, golden and distinct, and it seems a sin to sleep, and to lose so lovely a night. . . . . But for a true night view, mount upon the Azotea, and see all Mexico sleeping at your feet; the whole valley and the city itself floating in moonlight; the blue vault above gemmed with stars, and the mountains all bathed in silver, the white volcanoes seeming to join earth and sky. Here, even Salvator's genius would fail. We must evoke the ghost of Byron. The pencil can do nothing. Poetry alone might give a faint idea of a scene so wondrously beautiful.

26th. — We went yesterday with Mr. M——, his wife and daughter and a padre to visit the Archbishop's palace at Tacubaya, a pretty village about four miles from Mexico, and a favorite ride of ours in the morning. The country round Mexico, if not always beautiful, has the merit of being original, and on the road to Tacubaya, which goes by Chapultepec, you

pass large tracts of country, almost entirely uncultivated, though so near the city, or covered by the mighty maguey plant, the American agave, which will flourish on the most arid soil, and like a fountain in a desert place, furnishes the poorest Indian with the beverage most grateful to his palate. It seems to be to them what the reindeer is to the Esquimaux, fitted by nature to supply all his wants. The maguey and its produce *pulque* were known to the Indians in the most ancient times, and the primitive Aztecs may have become as intoxicated on their favorite *octli*, as they called it, as the modern Mexicans do on their beloved pulque.

It is not often that we see the superb flower with its colossal stem, for the plant that is in blossom is a useless beauty. The moment the experienced Indian becomes aware that his maguey is about to flower, he cuts out the heart, covers it over with the side leaves of the plant, and all the juice which should have gone to the great stem of the flower, runs into the empty basin thus formed, into which the Indian, thrice a-day, and during several months in succession, inserts his *acojote* or gourd, a kind of syphon, and applying his mouth to the other end, draws off the liquor by suction; a curious-looking process. First it is called honey-water, and is sweet and scentless; but easily ferments when transferred to the skins or earthen vases where it is kept. To assist in its fermentation, however, a little old pulque, *Madre pulque*, as it is called, which has fermented for many days, is added to it, and in twenty-four hours after it leaves the plant, you may imbibe it in all its perfection. It

is said to be the most wholesome drink in the world, and remarkably agreeable when one has overcome the first shock occasioned by its rancid odor. At all events, the maguey is a source of unfailing profit, the consumption of pulque being enormous, so that many of the richest families in the capital owe their fortune entirely to the produce of their magueys. When the owners do not make the pulque themselves, they frequently sell their plants to the Indians; and a maguey, which costs a real when first planted, will, when ready to be cut, sell for twelve or eighteen dollars; a tolerable profit, considering that it grows in almost any soil, requires little manure, and, unlike the vine, no very special or periodical care. They are planted in rows, like hedges, and though the individual plant is handsome, the general effect is monotonous. Of the fibres is made an excellent strong thread called *pita*, of which pita they make a strong brownish paper, and might make cloth if they pleased. There is, however, little improvement made by the Mexicans upon the ingenuity of their Indian ancestors, in respect to the maguey. Upon paper made of its fibres, the ancient Mexicans painted their hieroglyphical figures. The strong and pointed thorns which terminate the gigantic leaves, they used as nails and pins; and amongst the abuses, not the uses of these, the ancient sanguinary priests were in the habit of piercing their breasts and tearing their arms with them, in acts of expiation. Besides, there is a very strong brandy distilled from pulque, which has the advantage of producing intoxication in an infinitely shorter period

Together with the maguey, grows another immense production of nature, the *organos*, which resembles the barrels or pipes of an organ, and being covered with prickles, the plants growing close together, and about six feet high, makes the strongest natural fence imaginable, besides being covered with beautiful flowers. There is also another species of cactus, the nopal which bears the tuna, a most refreshing fruit, but not ripe at this season. The plant looks like a series of flat green pincushions fastened together, and stuck full of diminutive needles.

But though the environs of Mexico are flat, though there are few trees, little cultivation, uninhabited haciendas and ruined churches in all directions, still, with its beautiful climate and ever-smiling sky, the profusion of roses and sweet-pease in the deserted gardens, the occasional clumps of fine trees, particularly the graceful Arbol de Peru (*schinum molle*, the Peruvian pepper-tree), its bending branches loaded with bunches of coral-colored berries, the old orchards with their blossoming fruit-trees, the conviction that everything necessary for the use of man can be produced with scarcely any labor, all contributes to render the landscape one which it is impossible to pass through with indifference.

A magnificent ash tree (the Mexican *fresno*), the pride of Tacubaya, which throws out its luxuriant branches, covering a large space of ground, was pointed out to us as having a tradition attached to it. It had nearly withered away, when the Ylustrisimo Señor Fonti, the last of the Spanish Archbishops, gave it his solemn benediction, and prayed that its vigor

might be restored. Heaven heard his prayer; new buds instantly shot forth, and the tree has since continued to thrive luxuriantly.

Tacubaya is a scattered village, containing some pretty country-houses and some old gardens with stone fountains. The word country-house must not, however, be understood in the English acceptation of the word. The house, which is in fact merely used as an occasional retreat during the summer months, is generally a large empty building, with innumerable lofty rooms, communicating with each other, and containing the scantiest possible supply of furniture. One room will have in it a deal table and a few chairs; you will then pass through five or six quite empty; then you will arrive at two or three, with green painted bedsteads and a bench; the walls bare, or ornamented with a few old pictures of Saints and Virgins, and bare floors ornamented with nothing. To this add a kitchen and out-houses, a garden running to waste and overrunning with flowers, with stiff stone walks and a fountain in the middle, an orchard and an olive-ground; such are most of the haciendas that I have yet seen. That of the Countess C——a, which seems to be the handsomest in Tacubaya, is remarkable for commanding from its windows one of the most beautiful views imaginable of Mexico, the volcanoes and Chapultepec. From her azotea there is also a splendid view of the whole valley; and as her garden is in good order, that she has an excellent billiard-table, a piano, but above all, a most agreeable society in her own family, and that her house is the very centre of hospitality, one may certainly spend many pleasant

hours there, without regretting the absence of the luxurious furniture, which, in Mexico, seems entirely confined to the town houses. The Countess herself assured us that she had twice completely furnished her house, but as, in two revolutions, everything was thrown out of the windows and destroyed, she was resolved in future to confine herself to *le stricte necessaire.*

We went to see a house and garden which has fallen, in chance succession, to a poor woman, who, not being able to occupy her unexpected inheritance, is desirous of selling it. The garden and grounds are a deserted wilderness of sweets. We were joined by several monks from a neighboring convent, and with them went to visit the Archbishop's Palace. *Chemin faisant*, the padre informed us that he was formerly a merchant, a married man, and a friend of Yturbide's. He failed, his wife died, his friend was shot, and he joined a small community of priests who live retired in the convent of La Profesa, which, with its church, is one of the richest in Mexico.

The Arzobispado is a large, handsome, but deserted building, commanding the same fine view as from the house of the Countess, and with a garden and fine olive-ground, of which the trees were brought from Europe. The garden was filled with large double pink roses, and bunches of the mille-fleur-rose, which are disposed in arches, a favorite custom here, also with a profusion of sweet pease and jessamine, and a few orange trees. The gardener gave us some beautiful bouquets, and we lingered here till sunset, admiring the view. There is no point from

which Mexico is seen to such advantage. It is even a finer prospect than that from Chapultepec, since it embraces the castle itself, one of the most striking features in the landscape. But just as the sun sunk behind the mountains, a sudden change took place in the weather. The wind rose, great masses of dark clouds came driving over the sky, and the rain fell in torrents, forcing us to make a hasty retreat to our carriages, and having omitted to take any precautions, and this road not being particularly safe at night, we were probably indebted for our safe return more to "good luck than good guidance;" or, perhaps, we owed it in part to the *padre*, for the robbers are shy of attacking either soldiers or priests, the first from fear, and the second from awe.

Talking of robbers and robberies, rather a fertile theme of conversation, Señor —— told me the other day that in the time of a former President, it came to pass, that a certain gentleman went to take his leave at the palace, previous to setting off for Vera Cruz. He was received by the President, who was alone with his aid-de-camp, General ——, and mentioned to him in confidence that he was about to take a considerable sum of money with him, but that it was so well concealed in the lining of a trunk, which he described, that even if attacked by robbers, it was impossible they should discover it, and that therefore he did not think it necessary to take an escort with him. The next day this confidential gentleman left Mexico, in the diligence. Not far from the gates the coach was attacked, and, strange to say, the robbers singled out the very trunk which contained

the money, opened it, ripped up the lining, and having possessed themselves of the sum therein concealed, peaceably departed. It was a singular coincidence, that the captain of the robbers, though somewhat disguised, bore a striking general resemblance to the President's aid-de-camp! . . . These coincidences will happen. . . . .

My chief occupation, lately, has consisted in returning visits; and it is certain, that according to our views of the case, there is too wide a distinction between the full-dress style of toilette adopted by the ladies, when they pay visits, and the undress in which they receive their visiters at home. To this there are some, nay many exceptions, but *en masse* this is the case. . . . .

On first arriving from the United States, where an ugly woman is a phœnix, one cannot fail to be struck at the first glance with the general absence of beauty in Mexico. It is only by degrees that handsome faces begin to dawn upon us; but, however, it must be remarked, that beauty without color is apt to be less striking and to make less impression on us at first. The brilliant complexion and fine figure of an English woman strike every eye. The beauty of expression and finely chiselled features of a Spaniard steal upon us like a soft moonlight, while a French woman, however plain, has so graceful a manner of saying agreeable things, so charming a tournure, such a *piquante* way of managing her eyes and even her mouth, that we think her a beauty after half an hour's acquaintance, and even lose our admiration for the quiet and high-bred, but less graceful *Anglaise*.

The beauty of the women here consists in superb black eyes, very fine dark hair, a beautiful arm and hand, and small, well-made feet. Their defects are, that they are frequently too short and too fat, that their teeth are often bad, and their complexion not the clear olive of the Spaniards, nor the glowing brown of the Italians, but a bilious-looking yellow. Their notion of inserting the foot into a shoe half an inch shorter, ruins the foot and destroys their grace in walking, and, consequently, in every movement. This fashion is, fortunately, beginning to fall into disuse. . . . . It is therefore evident, that when a *Mexicana* is endowed with white teeth and a fine complexion, when she has not grown too fat, and when she does not torture her small foot to make it smaller, she must be extremely handsome. . . . . The general carelessness of their dress in the morning is, however, another great drawback to beauty. A woman without stays, with uncombed hair and *reboso*, had need to be very lovely if she retain any attraction at all. This indolence, indeed, is going out of fashion, especially among the younger part of the community, owing, perhaps, to their more frequent intercourse with foreigners, though it will probably be long before the morning at home is not considered a privileged time and place for dishabille. Notwithstanding, I have made many visits where I have found the whole family in a perfect state of order and neatness, but I have observed that there the fathers, and what is more important, the mothers, had travelled in Europe, and established a new order of things on their return.

Upon the whole, the handsomest women here are not Mexicans, that is, not born in the capital, but in the provinces. From Puebla, and Jalapa and Vera Cruz we see many distinguished by their brilliant complexions and fine teeth, and who are taller and more graceful than those born in the city of Mexico; precisely as in Spain, where the handsomest women in Madrid are said to be those born out of it.

The common Indians whom we see every day bringing in their fruit and vegetables to market, are, generally speaking, very plain, with a humble, mild expression of countenance, very gentle, and wonderfully polite in their manners to each other; but occasionally, in the lower clases, one sees a face and form so beautiful, that we might suppose such another was the Indian who enchanted Cortes; with eyes and hair of extraordinary beauty, a complexion dark but glowing, with the Indian beauty of teeth like the driven snow, together with small feet and beautifully-shaped hands and arms, however embrowned by sun and toil. In these cases, it is more than probable, that however Indian in her appearance, there must have been some intermarriages in former days between her progenitors and the descendants of the conquerors. We also occasionally observe very handsome *Rancheritas*, wives or daughters of the farmers, riding in front of their farm-servants on the same horse, with the white teeth and fine figures which are preserved by the constant exercise that country women must perforce take, whatever be their natural indolence; while the early fading of beauty in the higher classes, the decay of

teeth and the over corpulency so common amongst them, are no doubt the natural consequences of want of exercise and of injudicious food. There is no country in the world where so much animal food is consumed, and there is no country in the world where so little is required. The consumers are not the Indians, who cannot afford it, but the better classes who generally eat meat three times a day. This, with the quantities of chile and sweetmeats, in a climate which every one complains of as being irritating and inflammatory, probably produces those nervous complants which are here so general, and for which constant hot baths are the universal and agreeable remedy.

In point of amiability and warmth of manner, I have met with no women who can possibly compete with those in Mexico, and it appears to me that women of all other countries will appear cold and stiff by comparison. To strangers, this is an unfailing charm, and it is to be hoped that whatever advantages they may derive from their intercourse with foreigners, they may never lose this graceful cordiality, which forms so agreeable a contrast with English and American frigidity. . . .

C——n received an invitation some time ago to attend the *honras* of the daughter of the Marquis of S——a, that is, the celebration of mass for the repose of her soul. M—— was observing to-day, that if this Catholic doctrine be firmly believed, and that the prayers of the church are indeed availing to shorten the sufferings of those who have gone before us; to relieve those whom we love from thousands

of years of torture, it is astonishing how the rich do not become poor, and the poor beggars, in furtherance of this object; and that if the idea be purely human, it showed a wonderful knowledge of human nature, on the part of the inventor, as what source of profit could be more sure? . . .

Certainly no expense was spared on this occasion. San Augustin, in itself a beautiful church, was fitted up with extraordinary splendor. The walls and pillars were covered with draperies of rich crimson velvet. Innumerable wax candles were lighted, and an invisible band of music played during the intervals of the deep-rolling organ. All the monks of San Augustin, with their white hoods and sandalled feet, and carrying lighted tapers, were ranged near the altar. All the male relatives of the family, dressed in deep mourning, occupied the high-backed chairs placed along one side of the church, the floor of which was covered with a carpet, on which various veiled and mourning figures were kneeling, whom I joined. The whole service, the chanting, the solemn music, and the prayers, were very impressive, yet more joyous than sad, perhaps from the pervading feeling, that each note, as it rose to heaven, carried some alleviation to the spirit of the young and beloved one, for whose repose they prayed, and brought her nearer to the gates of the Holy City.

She was but twenty when she died; and our first house is close to that of the Marquis de S——a, her father, so that we were shocked to learn that she had expired on the night of our great serenade, (we, of course, not aware of her illness,) actually to the

sound of that gay music, and amidst the shouting and clapping of hands of the multitude. When the service was over, the procession passed out, every one kissing the hand of the Bishop as he went along, and we found some difficulty in making our way through the crowds of léperos, who, though not allowed to enter the church on this occasion, were swarming at the gates. Our carriage, as we returned home, formed one of a file of at least one hundred.

We found, on our table, another invitation to a very splendid Mass, which is to be performed in San Francisco, on account of the death of a friend of ours, a senator of distinguished family. The style of these invitations is as follows. A device is engraved on the paper, such as a tomb and cypress, and below is printed:

"José Maria A——,
José G—— de la C——a, and Basilio G——,
brothers and uncle of the
Senator Don Augustin T——,
who died on the twenty-eighth of last month,
request you to assist at the suffrage of the funeral honors, which, by the desire of his wife, Doña J—— A——, will be celebrated in the church of San Francisco on the morning of the eighth of this month of February, 1840, at nine o'clock."

Beside this invitation, was a piece of information of a different description:

"General A—— and Anna R—— beg to inform you, that they have contracted matrimony, and have the honor of offering themselves to your disposal.
"M——— Street, No. 24. Mexico, 1840."

Here, as in Spain, a lady, after her marriage, retains her maiden name; and though she adds to it that of her husband, she is more commonly known by her own.

From ignorance of another Mexican custom, I made rather an awkward blunder the other day, though I must observe, in my justification, that I had lately been in all the agonies of searching for servants, and had just filled all the necessary departments pretty much to my satisfaction. Therefore, when the porter of the Señora de —— brought me the compliments of his mistress, and that she begged to inform me that she had another servant at my disposal, (otra criada á mi disposicion,) I returned for answer, that I was greatly obliged, but had just hired a *recamerera,* (chambermaid). At this the man, stupid as he was, opened his great eyes with a slight expression of wonder. Fortunately, as he was turning away, I bethought me of inquiring after the Señora's health, and his reply, that "she and the baby were coming on very well," brought the truth suddenly before me, that the message was merely the etiquette used on informing the friends of the family of the birth of a child; a conviction which induced me slightly to alter the style of my answer. *Experientia docet!*

LETTER THE ELEVENTH.

Calle de Tacuba — The Leap of Alvarado — The "Noche Triste." — Sale of a Curate's Goods — Padre Leon — Leprosy — Pictures — The Annunciation — The Alameda — Paseo de Bucarelli — The Viga — Indians in canoes — A Murder — A Country Fête — Visit to the Colegia Vizcaino — The Jota Arragonesa — Old Soldiers.

THE street in which we live forms part of the Calle de Tacuba, the ancient Tlacopan, one of the great causeways by which ancient Mexico communicated with the continent. The other two were Tepeyayac (now Guadalupe) and Iztapalapan, by which last, the Mexican Emperor and his nobles went out to receive Cortes on his entrance to Tenochtitlan. The ancient city was divided into four districts, and this division is still preserved, with a change from the Indian names to those of San Pablo, San Sebastian, San Juan, and Santa Maria. The streets run in the same direction as they did in former times. The same street frequently changes its name in each division, and this part of the Calle de Tacuba, is occasionally called the "Plazuela del Sopilote," "San Fernando," and the "Puente de Alvarado," which is the more classic of the three, as celebrating the valor of a hero; while a ditch, crossed by a small bridge near this, still retains the name of "el Salto de Alvarado," in memory of the famous leap given

by the valiant Spaniard, "Pedro de Alvarado," on the memorable night called the "*noche triste*," of the 1st of July, 1520, when the Spaniards were forced to retreat from Mexico to the mountains of Tepeyayac.

On that "sad night," the rain falling in torrents, the moon and the stars refusing their light, the sky covered with thick clouds, Cortes commanded the silent march of his troops. Sandoval, the unconquerable captain, led his van-guard, and the stern hero Pedro de Alvarado, brought up the rear. A bridge of wood was carried by forty soldiers, to enable the troops to pass the ditches or canals, which must otherwise have impeded their retreat. It is said that in choosing the night for this march, Cortes was guided by the counsels of an astrologer.

Be that as it may, the first canal was happily passed by means of the portable bridge. The sentinels who guarded that point were overcome; but the noise of the struggle attracted the attention of the vigilant priests, who in the silence of the night were keeping watch in the temple. They blew the holy trumpets, cried to arms, and awakened the startled inhabitants from their slumbers.

In a moment the Spaniards were surrounded, by water and by land. At the second canal, which they had already reached, the combat was terrible. All was confusion, wounds, groans and death, and the canal became so choked with dead bodies, that the rear guard passed over them as over a bridge. We are told that Cortes himself swam more than once over the canal, regardless of danger, cheering on his

men, giving out his orders, every blow aimed in the direction of his voice, yet cool and intrepid as ever, in the midst of all the clamor and confusion and darkness. But arrived at the third canal, Alvarado finding himself alone, and surrounded by furious enemies, against whom it was in vain for his single arm to contend, fixed his lance in the bottom of the canal, and leaning against it, gave one spring to the opposite shore.

An Aztec author and contemporary of Cortes, says that when the Indians beheld this marvellous leap, and that their enemy was safe, they bit the dust, "comieron tierra;" and that the children of Alvarado, who was ever after known as "Alvarado of the leap," proved in the course of a law-suit before the judges of Tezcuco, by competent witnesses, the truth of this prowess of their father.

In a hitherto unpublished manuscript which has come to light this year in an Annual called the "Mosaico Mexicano," there are some curious particulars concerning the "*noche triste.*" It is said that the alarm was given by an old woman who kept a stall, and mention is made of the extraordinary valor of a lady called Maria de Estrada, who performed marvellous deeds with her sword, and who was afterwards married to Don Pedro Sanchez Farfan. It is also said, that when the Indians beheld the leap, they called out, "Truly this man is the offspring of the sun;" and that this manner of tearing up the ground, and eating earth by handfuls, was a common Indian mode of expressing admiration. However, Mexico is so rich in traditions, that when I particu-

larize this one, it is only because we live on the site where the event took place. . . .

We went a few days ago to see some effects which are for sale, belonging to a *Cura* who died lately, having heard that he has left some good paintings amongst them. We went in the evening, and found no one but the agent, an individual in the Daniel Lambert style; an old woman or two, and the padre Leon, a Jesuit, *Capellan* of the Capuchin nuns, and whose face besides being handsome, looks the very personification of all that is good, and mild, and holy. What a fine study for a painter his head would be! The old priest who died, and who had brought over various valuables from Spain, had a sister who was a leper, and who died in the hospital of San Lazaro. This dreadful scourge is by no means wholly unknown here; and though it is ordained that all who are afflicted by it shall be shut up in this hospital, I have met two persons, and one of these in society, who have the disease.

For this house, which is very large, the executors ask a preposterous rent. The goods of the defunct, which were for sale, were ranged on long tables in a very large apartment. There were virgins and saints, surplices, candlesticks and snuffer-trays; boxes of all sorts and sizes; an ill-set parure of emeralds and diamonds; several good paintings, especially one of the Annunciation. There was the death of San José, various saints, &c., all religious subjects, as may be supposed. Two C——n bought; one I greatly coveted. There were also two large pieces of embroidered velvet, on which

were the arms of Castille; said to have been hung on a portrait of Queen Cristina, when she entered Madrid. The agent begged C——n to buy them, asking at the same time an impossible price therefor.

There was moreover a large box full of relics from Jerusalem, which the padre told me could not be sold, but that I might choose whatever I liked, so that I returned home with various Agnus Deis, crucifixes and rosaries. The next day, a messenger from padre Leon brought me the painting of the Annunciation, which I had admired so much, and which is a sketch of Bayeu, a Valencian painter, from his own painting of the Annunciation in the royal chapel of Aranjuez; also the embroidered velvet, begging my acceptance of both. We have since wished to shew our sense of the padre's politeness, but he will neither accept presents, nor will he visit any one but such as in the hour of need require his spiritual services. In the house of sickness, and by the bed of death he is ever to be found, but chiefly if it is also the abode of poverty. In the house of the rich man he rarely visits, and then only when his presence has been requested — when he has been called in to administer spiritual consolation to the sick or the dying. But in the dwelling of the lowly, in the meanest and most wretched hovels, he has never to be sought. The guardian and friend of the poor, his charities are equally extensive and judicious. . . . .

Yesterday, being a fête day, the *Paséo* was very full of carriages, and consequently more brilliant and amusing than usual. This Paséo is the Mexican

Prado or Hyde-Park, while the *Viga* may be reckoned the Kensington Gardens of the metropolis, only however as succeeding to the other, for there is no walking, which in Mexico is considered wholly unfashionable ; and though a few ladies in black gowns and mantillas do occasionally venture forth on foot very early to shop, or to attend mass ; the streets are so ill kept, the pavements so narrow, the crowd so great, and the multitude of léperos in rags and blankets so annoying, that all these inconveniences added to the heat of the sun in the middle of the day, form a perfect excuse for their non-appearance on the streets of Mexico.

In the Alameda, however, which is so pretty and shady, it is very agreeable to walk, but though I have gone there frequently in the morning, I have met but three ladies on foot, and of these, two were foreigners. After all, every one has feet, but ladies alone have carriages, and it may be a mixture of aristocracy and indolence which prevents the Mexiean Doñas from profaning the soles of their feet by a contact with their mother earth.

The Paséo called *de Bucarelli*, after a Viceroy of that name, is a long and broad avenue bounded by the trees which he planted, and where there is a large stone fountain, whose sparkling waters look cool and pleasant, ornamented by a gilt statue of victory. Here, every evening, but more especially on Sundays and fête-days, which last are nearly innumerable, may be seen two long rows of carriages filled with ladies, crowds of gentlemen on horseback riding down the middle between these carriages,

soldiers at intervals attending to the preservation of public order, and multitudes of common people and lepéros, mingled with some well-dressed gentlemen on foot. The carriages are for the most part extremely handsome — European coaches with fine horses and odd liveries, mingled with carriages made in the country, some in the old Mexican fashion, heavy and covered with gilding, or a modern imitation of an English carriage, strong but somewhat clumsy and ill-finished. Various hackney-coaches, drawn by mules, are seen amongst the finer equipages, some very tolerable, and others of extraordinary form and dimensions, which bear tokens of having belonged in former days to some noble Don.

Horses, as being more showy, are more fashionable in these public promenades than mules, but the latter animal requires less care, and is capable of undergoing more fatigue than the horse. Most families have both mules and horses in their stable, and for those who visit much, this is necessary. The carriages, of which the most fashionable seems to be the *carratela*, open at the sides, with glass windows, are filled with ladies in full toilette, without mantillas, their heads uncovered, and, generally, *coiffées* with flowers or jewels; but the generality being close coaches, afford but an indistinct view of the inmates, as they pass along saluting each other with their fingers or fan. The whole scene on the evening of a fête, is exceedingly brilliant, but very monotonous. The equestrians, with their fine horses and handsome Mexican dresses, apparently take no notice of the ladies as they pass, rarely salute them, and never

venture to enter into conversation with them. But they are well aware to whom each carriage belongs, and consequently when it behoves them to make their horses curvet, and otherwise show off their horsemanship to advantage. Black eyes are upon them, and they know it. When the carriages have made two or three turns, they draw up at different stations in a semicircle a little off the road, and there the inmates sit and view the passers by. Occasional streams of smoke may be seen issuing from the carriages, but chiefly, it must be confessed, from the most old-fashioned equipages, and from the hackney-coaches. Smoking amongst ladies in the higher classes is going very much out of fashion, and is rarely practised openly except by elderly, or at least by married ladies. In a secondary class, indeed, young and old inhale the smoke of their cigaritos without hesitation, but when a custom begins to be considered *vulgar*, it will hardly subsist another generation. Unfeminine as it is, I do not think it looks ungraceful to see a pretty woman smoke.

This Paséo commands a fine view of the mountains, but I greatly prefer the *Viga*, which now begins to be the fashionable promenade. It is bordered by a canal, shaded by trees, which leads to the *Chinampas*, and is constantly covered with Indians in their canoes, bringing in fruit and flowers and vegetables to the Mexican market. Early in the morning it is a pretty sight to see them in these canoes gliding along in a perfect bower of green branches and flowers.

Yesterday, on returning from an evening drive

there, having left C——n and several gentlemen who had dined with us, taking coffee and smoking upon the balcony, I found that by good fortune I had escaped being witness of a murder which took place before our door. These gentlemen had observed, for some time, a group of persons, male and female, of the lower class, talking and apparently amusing themselves; sometimes laughing, and at other times disputing and giving each other blows. Suddenly, one of the number, a man, darted out from amongst the others, and tried to escape by clambering over the low wall which supports the arches of the aqueduct. Instantly, and quite coolly, another man followed him, drew his knife, and stabbed him in the back. The man fell backwards with a groan, upon which a woman of the party, probably the murderer's wife, drew out her knife, and stabbed the man several times to the heart, the others, meanwhile, neither speaking nor interfering, but looking on with folded arms, and their usual placid smile of indifference.

At the same time, some soldiers appeared in the distance, riding down the street, seeing which, the man and woman who had committed the murder, endeavored to take shelter in our house. The porter had, fortunately, barred the doors, and the soldiers riding up, took them both into custody. No sensation was excited by this, which is an everyday occurrence. Yesterday I saw a dead man lying near the *Longa* (the Exchange) and nobody took any notice of him. "You have been engaged in a disagreeable business," said I to Colonel ——, who had come to pay us a visit, and was still *en grande*

tenue, having just returned from the execution of one of his own soldiers, who had stabbed a comrade. "Yes," said he, with an air of peculiar gaiety; "we have just been shooting a little *tambour*." . . . . We were invited, lately, to a "dia de campo," (a day in the country,) a very common amusement here, in which, without any peculiar arrangement or etiquette, a number of people go out to some country place in the environs, and spend the day in dancing, breakfasting, walking about, &c. This was given at Tacubaya by Don B——o G——a, a senator, and was amusing enough. The music consisted of a band of guitars, from which the performers, common men, and probably self-taught, contrived to draw wonderfully good music, and, in the intervals of dancing, played airs from the Straniera and Puritani. The taste for music is certainly universal, the facilities wonderful, the science nearly at zero.

The ladies in general wore neither diamonds nor pearls, but a sort of demi-toilette, which would have been pretty if their dresses had been longer and their shoes not so tight. Some wore bonnets, which are considered full dress. The E—— family, and the young Señora de C——, were beautifully dressed. Mexican women, when they sit, have an air of great dignity, and the most perfect repose of feature. They are always to be seen to most advantage on their sofas, in their carriages, or in their boxes at the theatre.

There were immensely long tables, covered with Mexican cookery, which I begin to get accustomed to; and a great many toasts were given and a great

quantity of champagne drank. We danced a great deal, quadrilles, waltzes and Spanish country dances, walked about in the garden and orchard in the evening, and returned to dance again to the music of the indefatigable guitars, so that it was dusk when all the carriages set off, much about the same time, to bear each other company. . . .

The following day, the Countess C——a having been kind enough to procure an order for permission to visit the *Colegio Vizcaino*, which I was anxious to see, we went there with a large party. This college, founded by the gratuitous charities of Spaniards, chiefly from the province of Biscay, is a truly splendid institution. It is an immense building of stone, in the form of a square, on the model, they say, of the palace of Madrid, and possesses in the highest degree that air of solidity and magnificence which distinguishes the Mexican edifices, and which, together with the width and regularity of the streets, the vastness of the public squares, the total absence of all paltry ornament, the balconies with their balustrades and window-gratings of solid iron and bronze, render Mexico, in spite of its inefficient police, one of the noblest-looking cities in the world. The object of this college is to provide for the education of the children of Spaniards, especially for the descendants of Biscayans, in Mexico; a certain number being admitted upon application to the directors. There are female teachers in all the necessary branches, such as reading, writing, sewing, arithmetic, &c.; but besides this, there is a part of the building with a separate entrance, where the children of the poor,

of whatever country, are educated gratis. These spend the day there, and go home in the evening. The others are kept upon the plan of a convent, and never leave the institution while they belong to it; but the building is so spacious and airy, with its great galleries, and vast court and fine fountains, garden and spacious azotea, that the children are perfectly well off. There are *portiéres* and sisters, pretty much as in a convent; together with an old respectable *Rectora;* and the most perfect order and cleanliness prevails through the whole establishment.

We first visited the poor scholars, passing through the large halls where they sat with their teachers, divided into classes; sewing, writing, reading, embroidering, or casting up accounts, which last accomplishment must, I think, be sorely against the Mexican genius. One of the teachers made a little girl present me with a hair chain which she had just completed. Great order and decorum prevailed. Amongst the permanent scholars in the upper part of the institution, there are some who embroider astonishingly well — surplices, altar-hangings, in short, all the church vestments, in gold or silk. In the room where these are kept, are the confessionals for the pupils. The priests are in a separate room, and the penitents kneel before the grating, which separates the two apartments. All the sleeping-rooms are scrupulously neat and clean, with two green painted beds in each, and a small parlor off it, and frequently ornamented with flowers and birds. The girls are taught to cook and iron and make themselves gene-

rally useful, thus being fitted to become excellent wives to respectable men in their own rank of life.

We visited the chapel, which is extremely rich and handsome, encrusted with gilding, and very large. The pupils and their teachers attend mass in the gallery above, which looks down upon the chapel and has a grating before it. Here they have the organ, and various shrines, saints, *nacimientos*, &c. We were afterwards shown into a great hall, devoted to a different purpose, containing at one end a small theatre for the pupils to act plays in. All the walls of the long galleries are covered with old paintings on holy subjects, but many of them falling to pieces from damp or want of care. The building seems interminable, and, after wandering all through it for several hours, and visiting every thing — from the old garden below, where they gave me a large bunch of roses and carnations, to the azotea above, which looks down upon every street and church and convent in Mexico — we were not sorry to rest on the antique high-backed chairs of a handsome apartment, of which the walls were hung with the portraits of the different Spanish directors of the college, in ancient court costume. Here we found that the directors had prepared a beautiful collation for us — fruit, ices, cakes, custards, jellies, wines, &c., in great profusion.

Rested and refreshed, we proceeded to visit the pupils at their different classes. At the writing-class various specimens of that polite art were presented to us. That of the elder girls was generally bad, probably from their having entered the college late in

life. That of the younger ones was much more tolerable. We saw some really beautiful specimens of embroidery. Having returned to the hall, where there was a piano, some of our party began to sing and play. The Señora G——o sang an Italian air beautifully. She is evidently a scientific musician. The Señorita H——s played one of Herz's most difficult *combinations* with great execution, and a pretty girl, who is living in the convent, having been placed there by her *novio*, to keep her out of harm's way till he is prepared to give her his hand, sang a duet with another young lady, which I accompanied. Both had fine voices, but no notion of what they were singing. My friend, the Señora C—— delighted us with some of the innumerable and amusing verses of the *Jota Arragonesa*, which seem to have neither end nor beginning, all gay and all untranslatable, or at least losing their point and wit when put into an English dress. Such as

A poor man met with a sixpence,
  And for joy he gave up the ghost,
And in the troubles of death,
  Even his sixpence was lost.

———

The woman who loves two at once
  Knows what is discreet and right,
Since if one of her candles goes out
  Still the other remains alight, &c. . . .

It is impossible to see any building of this size kept more perfectly clean and neat; generally the case here in all establishments which are under petticoat government. These old Spanish institutions are cer-

tainly on a magnificent scale, though now for the most part neglected, and falling to ruin; nor has any work of great consequence been attempted since the independence. . . .

After various alarms and rumors in our house, concerning robbers, some true, some exaggerated, and some wholly false, we have at length procured two old Spanish soldiers of the *Invalidos*, who have taken up their quarters down stairs; and spend their time in cleaning their guns, making shoes, eating and sleeping, but as yet have had no occasion to prove their valor. Perhaps the fact of there being soldiers in the house will be sufficient to keep off the more ordinary robbers.

LETTER THE TWELFTH.

The Viga during the Carnival — Variety of equipages — The millionaires — The monks — Masked ball — An alarming sight — Medical students — Dinner at the Prussian Minister's — Rides on horseback — Indian love of flowers — Santa Anita — The Chinampas — Their origin — Indians in canoes — Song of "El Palomo" — Fighting — The Great Lakes — The Drain of Iluehuetoca — The great market of Tlatelolco.

16th March.

We are now in Lent, in the midst of prayer, church-going and fasting. The carnival was not very gay, with the exception of a few public masked balls, and very brilliant *paséos*. The Viga is one of the most beautiful promenades imaginable, though it might easily be rendered still more so; but even as it is, with its fine shady trees and canal, along which the lazy canoes are constantly gliding, it would be difficult, on a fine evening, just before sunset, especially on the evening of a fête-day, to find anywhere a prettier or more characteristic scene. Which rank of society shows the most taste in their mode of enjoyment, must be left to the scientific to determine; the Indians, with their flower-garlands and guitars, lying in their canoes, and dancing and singing after their own fashion, as they glide along the water, inhaling the balmy breezes; or the ladies, who, shut up in their close carriages, promenade along in full dress

and silence for a given space of time, acknowledging, by a gentle movement of their fan, the salutations of their fair friends from the recesses of their coaches, and seeming to dread lest the air of heaven should visit them too roughly; though the soft breeze, laden with balm steals over the sleepy water, and the last rays of the sun are gilding the branches of the trees with a broken and flickering light. . . .

Then at certain intervals of time, each carriage solemnly draws up beside its neighbor, (as in the other paséo); the elegant *carratela* beside the plebeian hackney-coach; the splendid equipage of the millionaire beside the lumbering and antique vehicle whose fashion hath now departed. There sit the inmates in silence, as if the business of life were over, and it was now their part to watch the busy world from the loop-holes of their retreat, and see it rolling along, whilst they take their rest. The gentlemen also draw up their prancing steeds, though not within hail of the carriages, but they in the fresh air and under the green trees have as much advantage over the Señoras as the wandering friar has over the cloistered nun.

Yet enter the Viga about five o'clock, when freshly watered, and the soldiers have taken their stand to prevent disturbances, and two long lines of carriages are to be seen going and returning, as far as the eye can reach, and hundreds of gay plebeians are assembled on the sidewalks, with flowers and fruit and *dulces* for sale, and innumerable equestrians in picturesque dresses, and with spirited horses, fill up the interval between the carriages, and the canoes are

covering the canal, the Indians singing and dancing lazily as the boats steal along, and the whole under the blue and cloudless sky, and in that pure, clear atmosphere; and could you only shut your eyes to the one disagreeable feature in the picture, the number of léperos busy in the exercise of their vocation, you would believe that Mexico must be the most flourishing, most enjoyable, and most peaceful place in the world, and moreover the wealthiest; not a republic certainly, for there is no well-dressed *people;* hardly a connecting link between the blankets and the satins, the poppies and the diamonds. As for the carriages, many would not disgrace Hyde-Park, though there are that would send a shiver all along Bond street; but the very contrast is amusing, and upon the whole, both as to horses and equipages, there is much more to admire than to criticise. . . .

There, for example, is the handsome carriage of the rich —— ——, who has one of the finest houses in Mexico; his wife wears a velvet turban twisted with large pearls, and has at this moment a cigar in her mouth. She is not pretty, but her jewels are superb. How he made his fortune, partly by gambling, and partly by even less honorable means, let some abler chronicler relate. Or look at this elegant *carratela*, with its glass sides all opened, giving to view a constellation of fair ones, and drawn by handsome gray *frisones*. These ladies are remarkable as having a more European air than most others, brighter colors, longer and simpler dresses, and Paris bonnets. Perhaps they have been in Europe. It

is remarkable that the horses of the gentlemen all appear peculiarly unmanageable every time they pass this carriage. Another handsome, plain carriage, containing the family of one of the ministers; mother and daughters, all beautiful, with Spanish eyes and dark glowing complexions, followed close by a hackney-coach containing women with rebosos, and little children, with their faces and fingers all bedaubed with candy. . . . . Some of the coachmen and footmen wear Mexican dresses, and others have liveries. . . . . But here come three carriages *en suite*, all with the same crimson and gold livery, all luxurious, and all drawn by handsome white horses. Is it the President? Certainly not; it is too ostentatious. Even royalty goes in simpler guise, when it condescends to mingle in the amusements of its subjects. In the first carriage appear the great man himself and his consort, rather withdrawing from the plebeian gaze. There is here much crimson and gold, much glass and well-stuffed cushions, much comfort and magnificence combined. Two handsome northern steeds, white and prancing, draw this commodious equipage. The next is a splendid coach, containing the children and servants, while in the third equally magnificent, are the babies and nurses. By the side of the first carriage rides an elderly gentleman, who, were his seat firmer, might be mistaken for a *picador*. He wears a rich Mexican dress, all covered with gold embroidery; his hat with gold rolls is stuck jauntily on one side, contrasting oddly enough with his uneasy expression

of countenance, probably caused by the inward trepidation of which he cannot wholly repress the outward sign while managing his high-bred steed, and with his feet pressing his silver stirrups, cautiously touching him with a whip which has a large diamond in the handle.

But the chief wonder of his equipment, and that which has procured him such a retinue of little ragged and shouting boys, is his saddle. This extraordinary piece of furniture, which cost the owner five thousand dollars, is entirely covered with velvet, richly embossed in massive gold; he sometimes appears with another, inlaid with pure silver.

His whole appearance is the most singular imaginable, and the perturbation of spirit in which he must return when it begins to grow dusk, and he reflects at once upon his own value, and his countrymen's taste for appropriation, must balance the enjoyment which his vanity receives from the admiration of the little boys in the Paséo.

Just as these millionaires pass by, an old hackney-coach in their wake, attracts our attention, exactly the sort of quaint old vehicle in which it sometimes pleases Lady Morgan to introduce her heroines. In it are six figures, closely masked, their faces covered with shawls. After many conjectures, it is impossible to guess whether they are men or women. It *was* impossible, but as the carriages return, the wind suddenly blows aside the shawls of two of the party, and discloses the gowns and hoods of the — friars! *O tempora! O mores!* . . . .

There were three masked balls at the theatre, of

which we only attended one. We went about ten o'clock to a box on the pit tier, and although a *pronunciamiento* (the fashionable term here for a revolution) was prognosticated, we found everything very quiet and orderly, and the ball very gay and crowded. As we came in, and were giving our tickets, a number of masks came springing by, shrieking out our names in their unearthly voices. Captain G——, brother of Lord ——, came to our box; also a scion of La jeune France, M. de C——, who condescendingly kept his hat on during the whole evening. In a box directly above us, were the French legation who arrived lately. Amongst the women, the dresses were for the most part dominos, adopted for greater concealment, as it was not considered very creditable to be there.

There were also several in men's attire, chiefly French modistes, generally a most disreputable set here, and numerous men dressed as women. There were masked Poblanas without stockings, and with very short petticoats; knights in armor; innumerable dresses probably borrowed from the theatre, and even more than the usual proportion of odd figures. The music was very good, and the dancers waltzed and *galloped*, and flew round the room like furies. There was at least no want of animation. Hundreds of masks spoke to us, but I discovered no one. One in a domino was peculiarly anxious to direct my attention to the Poblana dress, and asked me if it would have done for me to attend the fancy ball in such a costume. Very angry at his absurdity, I began to explain how I should have dressed, when I

recollected the folly of explaining anything to a creature whom I did not know. C——n stepped out of the box, to walk amongst the crowd, at which various masks shewed great signs of joy, surrounding and shaking hands with him.

The boxes were filled with ladies, and the scene was very amusing. Señor M——, whose box we occupied, ordered in cakes and wine, and about one o'clock we left the ball-room and returned home, one of our old soldiers acting as lackey. . . . .

I paid a visit the other day, which merits to be recorded. It was to the rich Señora ——, whose first visit I had not yet returned. She was at home, and I was shewn into a very large drawing-room, where, to my surprise, I found the lamps, mirrors, &c., covered with black crape, as in cases of mourning here. I concluded that some one of the family was dead, and that I had made a very ill-timed first visit. However, I sat down, when my eyes were instantly attracted by *something awful*, placed directly in front of the sofa where I sat. There were six chairs ranged together, and on these lay stretched out a figure, apparently a dead body, about six feet long, enveloped in a black cloth, the feet alone visible, from their pushing up the cloth. Oh horror! Here I sat, my eyes fixed upon this mysterious apparition, and lost in conjecture as to whose body it might be. The master of the house? He was very tall, and being in bad health might have died suddenly. My being received, argued nothing against this, since the first nine days after a death, the house is invariably crowded with friends and acquaintances, and the

widow, or orphan, or childless mother must receive the condolences of all and sundry, in the midst of her first bitter sorrow. There seems to be no idea of grief wishing for solitude.

Pending these reflections, I sat uneasily, feeling or fancying a heavy air in the apartment, and wishing, most sincerely, that some living person would enter. I thought even of slipping away, but feared to give offence, and in fact began to grow so nervous, that when the Señora de —— entered at length, I started up as if I had heard a pistol. She wore a colored muslin gown and a blue shawl; no signs of mourning!

After the usual complimentary preface, I asked particularly after her husband, keeping a side glance on the mysterious figure. He was pretty well. Her family? Just recovered from the small pox, after being severely ill. "Not dangerously?" said I, hesitatingly, thinking she might have *a tall son*, and that she alluded to the recovery of the others. "No;" but her sister's children had been alarmingly ill. "Not *lost* any, I hope?" — "None." Well, so taken up was I, that conversation flagged, and I answered and asked questions at random, until, at last, I happened to ask the lady if she were going to the country soon. "Not to remain. But to-morrow we are going to convey a *Santo Cristo* (a figure of the Crucifixion) there, which has just been made for the chapel;" glancing towards the figure, "for which reason this room is, as you see, hung with black." I never felt so relieved in my life, and thought of the Mysteries of Udolpho.

The houses being so large, and the servants not drilled to announce visiters; besides that the entresols are frequently let to other families, it is a matter of no small difficulty for a stranger to pioneer him or herself into the presence of the people of the house. The mistakes that I have made! for not being aware of this fact concerning the entresols, which are often large and handsome, and the porter having begged me to walk up, I generally stopped at the first landing-place, and then *walked up* to the first door that I saw. I did walk in one morning upon two gentlemen, who seemed marvellously startled by my visit. They looked like two medical students, and were engaged before a table, Heaven knows how; dissecting, I imagine. I inquired for the Señora ——, which astonished them still more, as well it might. However, they were very civil, and rushed down stairs to call up the carriage. After that adventure, I never entered a house unaccompanied by a footman, until I had learnt my way through it.

We had a pleasant dinner-party a few days ago at the Prussian Minister's, and met the C——s family there. The Condesa de C——, has been a long while in Europe, and in the best society, and is now entirely devoted to the education of her daughters, giving them every advantage that Mexico can afford, in the way of masters, besides having at home a Spanish governess, to assist her, an excellent woman, whom they regard as a second mother.

Though there is very little going on in Mexico at present, I amuse myself very well; there is so much

to see, and the people are so kind and friendly. Having got riding horses, we have been making excursions all round the country, especially early in the morning, before the sun is high, when the air is delightfully cool and refreshing. Sometimes we go to the Viga at six in the morning, to see the Indians bringing in their flowers and vegetables, by the canal. The profusion of sweet pease, double poppies, blue bottles, stock gilly-flower, and roses, I never saw equalled. Each Indian woman, in her canoe, looks as if seated in a floating flower-garden. The same love of flowers distinguishes them now, as in the time of Cortes ; the same which Humboldt remarked centuries afterwards. In the evening, these Indian women, in their canoes, are constantly crowned with garlands of roses or poppies. Those who sit in the market, selling their fruit or their vegetables, appear as if they sat in bowers formed of fresh green branches and colored flowers. In the poorest village church the floor is strewed with flowers, and before the service begins, fresh nosegays are brought in and arranged upon the altar. The baby at its christening, the bride at the altar, the dead body in its bier, all are adorned with flowers. We are told that in the days of Cortes, a bouquet of rare flowers was the most valuable gift presented to the ambassadors who visited the court of Montezuma, and it presents a strange anomaly, this love of flowers having existed along with their sanguinary worship and barbarous sacrifices.

We went the other evening on the canal, in a large canoe, with an awning, as far as the little village

of Santa Anita, and saw, for the first time, the far-famed Chinampas, or floating gardens, which have now become fixtures, and are covered with vegetables, intermingled with flowers, with a few poor huts beside them, occupied by the Indians, who bring these to the city for sale. There were cauliflowers, chili, tomatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables, but I was certainly disappointed in their beauty. They are however, curious, on account of their origin. So far back as 1245 it is said, the wandering Aztecs or Mexicans arrived first at Chapultepec, when, being persecuted by the princes of Taltocan, they took refuge in a group of islands to the south of the lake of Tezcuco. Falling under the yoke of the Tezcucan kings, they abandoned their island home, and fled to Tezapan, where, as a reward for assisting the chiefs of that country in a war against other petty princes, they received their freedom, and established themselves in a city to which they gave the name of Mexicalsingo, from Mejitli, their god of war — now a collection of strong barns and poor huts. But they did not settle there, for to obey an oracle they transported themselves from this city to the islands east of Chapultepec, to the western side of the lake of Tezcuco. An ancient tradition had long been current amongst them, that wherever they should behold an eagle seated upon a nopal whose roots pierced a rock, there they should found a great city. In 1325 they beheld this sign, and on the spot, in an island in the lake, founded the first house of God — the Teocalli or Great Temple of Mexico. During all their wanderings, wherever they stopped, the Aztecs

cultivated the earth, and lived upon what nature gave them. Surrounded by enemies, and in the midst of a lake where there are few fish, necessity and industry compelled them to form floating fields and gardens on the bosom of the waters.

They weaved together the roots of aquatic plants, intertwined with twigs and light branches, until they had formed a foundation sufficiently strong to support a soil formed of the earth which they drew from the bottom of the lake; and on it they sowed their maize, their chili, and all other plants necessary for their support. These floating gardens were about a foot above the water, and in the form of a long square. Afterwards, in their natural taste for flowers, they not only cultivated the useful but the ornamental, and these small gardens multiplying, were covered with flowers and aromatic herbs, which were used in the worship of the gods, or were sent to ornament the palace of the emperor. The Chinampas along the canal of the Viga, are no longer floating gardens, but fixed to the main land, in the marshy grounds lying between the two great lakes of Chalco and Tezcuco. A small trench full of water separates each garden; and though now in this marshy land they give but a faint idea of what they may have been, when they raised their flower-crowned heads above the clear waters of the lake, and when the Indians, in their barks, wishing to remove their habitations, could tow along their little islands of roses, it is still a pretty and a pleasant scene.

We bought numerous garlands of roses and poppies from the Indian children, both here and at Santa

Anita, a little village where we landed, and as we returned towards evening, we were amused by the singing and dancing of the Indians. One canoe came close up to ours, and kept beside it for some time. A man was lying lazily at the bottom of the boat, tingling his guitar, and one or two women were dancing monotonously and singing at the same time to his music. Sundry jars of pulque and earthen dishes with tortillas and chili and pieces of *tasajo*, long festoons of dried and salted beef, proved that the party were not without their solid comforts, in spite of the romantic guitar, and the rose and poppy garlands with which the dancing nymphs were crowned. Amongst others, they performed the *Palomo*, the Dove, one of their most favorite dances. The music is pretty, and I send it you with the words, the music from ear; the words are given me by my friend, the Senora A——d, who sings all these little Indian airs in perfection. If we may form some judgment of a people's civilization by their ballads, none of the Mexican songs give us a very high idea of theirs. The words are generally a tissue of absurdities, nor are there any patriotic songs, which their new-born freedom might have called forth from so musical a people. At least I have as yet only discovered one air of which the words bear reference to the glorious "Grito de Dolores," and which asserts in rhyme that on account of that memorable event, the Indian was able to get as drunk as a Christian! The translation of the Palomo is as follows:

"What are you doing, little dove, there in the wine-

shop? Waiting for my love, until Tuesday my life. A dove in flying, hurt her little wing. If you have your dove, I have my little dove too. A dove in flying, all her feathers fell off. Women pay badly; not all, but some of them. Little dove of the barracks, you will tell the drummers, when they beat the retreat, to strike up the march of my loves. Little dove, what are you doing there, leaning against that wall? Waiting for my dove, till he brings me something to eat." At the end of each verse, the chorus of "Palomita, palomo, palomo."

Yet, monotonous as it is, the air is so pretty, the women sang so softly and sleepily, the music sounded so soothingly as we glided along the water, that I felt in a pleasant half-dreamy state of perfect contentment, and was sorry when arriving at the landing place, we had to return to a carriage and civilized life, with nothing but the garlands of flowers to remind us of the Chinampas.

Unfortunately, these people generally end by too frequent applications to the jarro of pulque, or what is worse, to the pure spirit known by the name of *chinguirite*; the consequence of which is, that from music and dancing, and rose-becrowning, they proceed to quarrelling and jealousy, and drunkenness, which frequently terminates in their fighting, stabbing each other, or throwing each other into the canal. "The end crowns the work."

Noble as this present city of Mexico is, one cannot help thinking how much more picturesque the ancient Tenochtitlan was, and how much more fertile its valley must have been, on account of the great

lakes. Yet even in the time of Cortes, these lakes had no great depth of water, and still further back, in the time of the Indian Emperors, navigation had been so frequently interrupted in seasons of drought, that an aqueduct had been constructed in order to supply the canals with water.

After this the Spaniards, like all new settlers, hewed down the fine trees in this beautiful valley, both on plain and mountain, leaving the bare soil exposed to the vertical rays of the sun. Then their well-founded dread of inundation caused them to construct the famous *Desagüe* of Huehuetoca, the drain or subterranean conduit or channel in the mountain, for drawing off the waters of the lakes, thus leaving marshy lands or sterile plains covered with carbonate of soda, where formerly were silver lakes covered with canoes. This last was a necessary evil, since the Indian Emperors themselves were sensible of its necessity, and had formed great works for draining the lakes, some remains of which works still exist in the vicinity of the Peñon. The great Desagüe was begun in 1607, when the Marquis of Salinas was Viceroy of Mexico; and the operations were commenced with great pomp, the Viceroy assisting in person, mass being said on a portable altar, and fifteen hundred workmen assembled, while the Marquis himself began the excavation by giving the first stroke with a spade. From 1607 to 1830, eight millions of dollars were expended, and yet this great work was not brought to a conclusion. However, the limits of the two lakes of Zumpango and San Cristobal, to the north of the valley, were thus greatly

reduced, and the lake of Tezcuco, the most beautiful of all the five, no longer received their contributions. Thus the danger of inundations has diminished, but water and vegetation have diminished also, and the suburbs of the city, which were formerly covered with beautiful gardens, now present to the eye an arid expanse of efflorescent salt. The plains near San Lazaro especially, in their arid whiteness, seem characteristic of the unfortunate victims of leprosy enclosed in the walls of that hospital.

We rode out the other day by the *barrio*, or ward of Santiago, which occupies part of the ancient Tlatelolco, which once constituted a separate state had kings of its own, and was conquered by a Mexican monarch, who made a communication by bridges between it and Mexico. The great market mentioned by Cortes was held here, and its boundaries are still pointed out, whilst the convent chapel stands on the height where Cortes erected a battering engine, when he was besieging the Indian Venice.

LETTER THE THIRTEENTH.

Convent of San Joaquin — Mexico in the morning — Tacuba — Carmelite Prior — Convent Garden — Hacienda of Los Morales — El Olivar — A *Huacamaya* — Humming Birds — Correspondence — Expected Consecration — Visit to the Mineria — Botanic Garden — Arbol de las Manitas — The Museum — Equestrian Statue — Academy of Painting and Sculpture — Disappointment.

Early this morning we rode to the Convent of San Joaquin, belonging to friars of the Carmelite order, passing through Tacuba, the ancient Tlacopan, once the capital of a small kingdom, and whose monarch, *Tetlepanquetzaltzin,* (short and convenient name) Cortes caused to be hanged on a tree for a supposed or real conspiracy. The number of carts, the innumerable Indians loaded like beasts of burthen, their women with baskets of vegetables in their hands and children on their backs, the long strings of *arrièros* with their loaded mules, the droves of cattle, the flocks of sheep, the herds of pigs, render it a work of some difficulty to make one's way on horseback out of the gates of Mexico at an early hour of the morning, but it must be confessed, that the whole scene is lively and cheerful enough, to make one forget that there is such a thing as care in the world. There is an indifferent, placid smile on every face, and the bright blue sky smiling over them all; dogs bark,

and asses bray, and the Indian, with near a mule's load on his back, drags his hat off to salute a bevy of his bronze-colored countrymen, nearly equally laden with himself, and they all show their teeth, and talk their liquid Indian, and pass on.

These plains of Tacuba, once the theatre of fierce and bloody conflicts, and where, during the siege of Mexico, Alvarado of the leap fixed his camp, now present a very tranquil scene. Tacuba itself is now a small village of mud huts, with some fine old trees, a few very old ruined houses, a ruined church, and some traces of a building which —— assured us had been the palace of their last monarch; whilst others declare it to have been the site of the Spanish encampment. San Joaquin, also a poor village, contains the fine convent and immense walled garden and orchard belonging to the rich monks of the Carmelite order. As C——n knows the prior, he sent in our names, and I was admitted as far as the sacristy of the convent church. The prior received us with the utmost kindness. He is a good-looking man, extremely amiable and well-informed, and still young. The gentlemen were admitted into the interior of the convent, which they describe as being a very large, handsome building, clean and airy, with a fine old library, chiefly composed of theological works; to the garden, which is immensely large, and though not much cultivated, full of flowers; and to the great orchard, celebrated for the profusion and excellence of its fruit. There is a mirador in the garden which can be seen from the road, and from which there is a very extensive view. I was very anxious for ad-

mittance only to the garden, and pleaded the *manly* appearance of my riding hat, which would prevent all scandal, were I seen from a distance, but the complaisance of the good prior would not go quite so far as that, so I sat in the sacristy and conversed with a good-natured old monk with a double chin, whilst the others wandered through the grounds. They afterwards gave us a very nice breakfast, simple, but good; fish from the lake, different preparations of eggs, *riz-au-lait*, coffee and fruit. The monks did not sit down with us, nor would they partake of anything themselves. . . .

We went in the evening to see a pretty Hacienda called Los Morales, (the mulberry trees) belonging to a Spaniard, which has a nice garden with a bath in it, and where they bestowed a quantity of beautiful flowers on us.

The other day we set off early, together with the Belgian and French Ministers and their families, in carriages, to visit a beautiful deserted Hacienda called *el Olivar*, belonging to the Marquis of Santiago. The house is perfectly bare, with nothing but the walls; but the grounds are a wilderness of tangled flowers and blossoming trees — rose-bushes — sweet pease and all manner of fragrant flowers. We passed an agreeable day, wandering about, breakfasting on the provisions brought with us, arranging large bouquets of flowers, and firing at a mark, which must have startled the birds in this solitary and uncultivated retreat. We had a pleasant family dinner at the E——'s, and passed the evening at the Baron de ——'s. The gentlemen returned late, it being

the day of a diplomatic dinner at the English Minister's.

The Countess del V——e has just sent me a beautiful bird with the most gorgeous plumage of the brightest scarlet and blue. It is called a *huacamaya*, and is of the parrot species, but three times as large, being about two feet from the beak to the tip of the tail. It is a superb creature, but very wicked, gnawing not only its own pole, but all the doors, and committing great havoc amongst the plants, besides trying to bite every one who approaches it. It pronounces a few words very hoarsely and indistinctly, and has a most harsh, disagreeable cry. In fact it presumes upon its beauty to be as unamiable as possible.

I prefer some beautiful little humming birds, (*chupamirtos* as they are called here,) which have been sent me, and which I am trying to preserve alive, but I fear the cold will kill them, for though we see them occasionally here, hanging by their beaks upon the branches of the flowers, like large butterflies, and shaking their brilliant little wings so rapidly that they seem to emit sparkles of colored light, still this is not their home, properly speaking — they belong to the tierra caliente. These little birds are of a golden green and purple, and are so tame, that whilst I am writing, I have two on my shoulder, and one perched on the edge of a glass, diving out its long tongue for sugar and water. Our live stock is considerable; we have Guinea fowls, who always remind me of old maiden ladies in half-mourning, and whose screaming notes match those of the huacamaya, various lit-

tle green parrots, a scarlet cardenal, one hundred and sixty pigeons in the pigeon-house, and three fierce dogs in conspicuous situations.

I received a very polite letter to-day from the Señora de Santa Anna, and as it was enclosed in a few lines from Santa Anna himself, I send you his *autograph*, for I doubt much whether we have seen the last of that illustrious personage, or whether his philosophic retirement will endure forever.

I have been endeavoring lately to procure permission from Señor Posada, who is shortly to be consecrated Archbishop, to visit the Convents of Nuns in Mexico. Señor C——o, secretary of state, our particular friend, has been kind enough to interest himself in the matter, though with indifferent hopes of success. A few days ago he sent me his correspondence with Señor Posada, who observes that the Vice-Queens alone had the privilege of the entrée, and seems to hesitate a good deal as to the advisableness of granting a permission which might be considered a precedent for others. However I think he is too amiable to resist our united entreaties. I hold out as an argument, that C——n, being the *Duplicado* of the Queen herself, my visit is equal to that of the Vice-Queen, which argument has at least amused him. His consecration is fixed for the 31st of May.

Don Pedro Fonti, the last Archbishop named in the time of the Spanish dominion, having renounced the mitre, three illustrious churchmen were proposed to fill the vacant place; this Don Manuel Posada, Don Antonio Campos, and Dr. Don José Maria de Santiago. The first was chosen by the Mexican

government, and was afterwards proclaimed in the Roman Consistory last December, with the approbation of Gregory the sixteenth. They are now only waiting for the pontifical bulls, which are daily expected from Rome; and it is said that the ceremony, which will take place in the Cathedral, will be very magnificent.

April 3d. — Accompanied by the —— Minister, we spent yesterday in visiting the Mineria, the Botanic Garden, the Museum, &c., all which leave a certain disagreeable impression on the mind, since, without having the dignity of ruins, they are fine buildings neglected. The Mineria, or School of Mines, the work of the famous architect and sculptor Tolsa, is a magnificent building, a palace whose fine proportions would render it remarkable amongst the finest edifices of any European country. All is on a great scale, its noble rows of pillars, great staircases, large apartments and lofty roofs, but it reminds one of a golden aviary, containing a few common sparrows. Several rich Spaniards contributed more than six hundred thousand dollars to its construction. We were shown through the whole of this admirable building by the director, who occupies a very handsome house attached to it. But however learned the professors may be, and amongst them is the scientific Señor del Rio, now very old, but a man of great learning and research; the collections of minerals, the instruments and models, are all miserable and ill kept.

The Botanic Garden, within the Palace, is a small ill-kept enclosure, where there still remain some rare

plants of the immense collection made in the time of the Spanish government, when great progress was made in all the natural sciences, four hundred thousand dollars having been expended in botanical expeditions alone. Courses of botanical lectures were then given annually by the most learned professors, and the taste for natural history was universal.

El Arbol de las Manitas, (the tree of the small hands) was the most curious which we saw in the garden. The flower is of a bright scarlet, in the form of a hand, with five fingers and a thumb; and it is said that there are only three of these trees in the Republic. The gardener is an old Italian, who came over with one of the Viceroys, and though now one hundred and ten years old, and nearly bent double, possesses all his faculties. The garden is pretty from the age of the trees, and luxuriance of the flowers, but melancholy as a proof of the decay of science in Mexico. The Palace itself, now occupied by the President, formerly belonged to Cortés, and was ceded by his descendants to the government. In exchange they received the ground formerly occupied by the palace of the Aztec kings, and built on it a very splendid edifice, where the state archives are kept, and where the *Monte Pio*, (the office where money is lent on plate, jewels, &c.) now is, the director of which is Don Francisco Tagle, whose apartments within the building are very elegant and spacious.

The Museum, within the University, and opposite the Palace, in the plaza called del Volador, contains

many rare and valuable works, many curious Indian antiquities, but they are ill arranged. On the walls are the portraits of the vice-kings, beginning with Hernan Cortes. We spent a long while here examining these antiquities; but we have seen nothing in Mexico to equal the beauty of the colossal equestrian statue in bronze of Charles the Fourth, placed on a pedestal of Mexican marble, which stands in the court of the University, but formerly adorned the middle of the square. It is a magnificent piece of sculpture, the master-piece of Tolsa, remarkable for the noble simplicity and purity of its style, and was made at the expense of an ex-Viceroy, the Marquis of Branciforte. We also saw the Goddess of War lying in a corner of the court, beside the Stone of sacrifices, which we had already been shown.

To-day we have been visiting the Academy of painting and sculpture, called the Academy of Fine Arts, of which I unfortunately recollected having read Humboldt's brilliant account, in my forcibly prolonged studies on board the Jason, and that he mentions its having had the most favorable influence in forming the national taste. He tells us, that every night in these spacious halls, well illuminated by Argand lamps, hundreds of young men were assembled, some sketching from the plaster-casts, or from life, and others copying designs of furniture, candelabras and other bronze ornaments; and that here, all classes, colors and races were mingled together; the Indian beside the white boy, and the son of the poorest mechanic beside that of the richest lord. Teaching was

gratis, and not limited to landscapes and figures, one of the principal objects being to propagate amongst the artists a general taste for elegance and beauty of form, and to enliven the national industry. Plaster-casts, to the amount of forty thousand dollars, were sent out by the king of Spain, and as they possess in the Academy various colossal statues of basalt and porphyry, covered with Aztec hieroglyphics, it would have been curious, as the same learned traveller remarks, to have collected these monuments in the court-yard of the Academy, and compared the remains of Mexican sculpture, monuments of a semi-barbarous people, with the graceful creations of Greece and Rome.

Let no one visit the Academy with these recollections or anticipations in his mind. . . . That the simple and noble taste which distinguishes the Mexican buildings, their perfection in the cutting and working of their stones, the chaste ornaments of the capitals and relievos, are owing to the progress they made in this very Academy, is no doubt the case. The remains of these beautiful but mutilated plaster-casts, the splendid engravings which still exist, would alone make it probable ; but the present disorder, the abandoned state of the building, the non-existence of these excellent classes of sculpture and painting, and above all, the low state of the fine arts in Mexico, at the present day, are amongst the sad proofs, if any were wanting, of the melancholy effects produced by years of civil war and of unsettled government. . . .

The Holy Week is now approaching, and already

the Indians are to be seen bringing in the palm-branches and the flowers for the altars, and they are beginning to erect booths and temporary shops, and to make every preparation for the concourse of people who will arrive next Sunday from all the different villages and ranchos, far and near.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

Palm Sunday — Holy Thursday — Variety of costumes — San Francisco — Santo Domingo — Santa Teresa — Nuns — Stone bust — The Academy — Religious procession — Pilgrimage to the Churches — Santa Clara — Nun's voice — Orange-trees and rose-bushes — The Cathedral illuminated — Our Saviour in chains — Good Friday — The great Square towards Evening — Dresses of men, women and children — Approach of the Host — Judas — Great Procession — Misèrere — The square by moonlight — A lonely walk — *Sabado de gloria* — Ball in contemplation — Weekly Soirées — Embroidered muslins — A Tertulia at home.

21st April.

On the morning of Palm Sunday, I went to the Cathedral, accompanied by Mademoiselle de —— daughter of the —— Minister. We found it no easy matter to make our way through the crowd, but at last, by dint of patience and perseverance, and changing our place very often, we contrived to arrive very near the great altar; and there we had just taken up our position, when a disinterested man gave us a friendly hint, that as the whole procession, with their branches, must inevitably squeeze past the very spot where we were, we should probably be crushed or suffocated; consequently we followed him to a more convenient station, also close to the altar and defended by the railing, where we found ourselves tolerably well off. Two ladies, to whom he made the same

proposition, and who rejected it, we afterwards observed in a sad condition, their mantillas nearly torn off and the palm branches sweeping across their eyes.

In a short time, the whole Cathedral presented the appearance of a forest of palm trees, (à la Birnam wood) moved by a gentle wind; and under each tree a half-naked Indian, his rags clinging together with wonderful pertinacity; long, matted, dirty black hair both in men and women, bronze faces and mild unspeaking eyes, or all with one expression of eagerness to see the approach of the priests. Many of them had probably travelled a long way, and the palms were from tierra caliente, dried and plaited into all manner of ingenious ways. Each palm was about seven feet high, so as far to overshadow the head of the Indian who carried it; and whenever they are blessed, they are carried home to adorn the walls of their huts. The priests arrived, at length, in great pomp, and also carrying palm branches. For four mortal hours, we remained kneeling or sitting on the floor, and thankful we were when it was all over, and we could make our way once more into the fresh air.

From this day during the whole week, all business is suspended, and but one train of thought occupies all classes, from the highest to the lowest. The peasants flock from every quarter, shops are shut, churches are opened; and the Divine Tragedy enacted in Syria eighteen hundred years ago, is now celebrated in land then undiscovered, and by the descendants of nations sunk in Paganism for centuries after that period.

But amongst the lower classes, the worship is emphatically the worship of Her who Herself predicted, "From henceforth all nations shall call me blessed." Before her shrines and at all hours, thousands are kneeling. With faces expressive of the most intense love and devotion, and with words of the most passionate adoration, they address the mild image of the Mother of God. To the Son their feelings seem composed of respectful pity, of humble but more distant adoration; while to the Virgin they appear to give all their confidence, and to look up to her as to a kind and bountiful Queen, who, dressed in her magnificent robes and jewelled diadem, yet mourning in all the agony of her divine sorrows, has condescended to admit the poorest beggar to participate in her woe, whilst in her turn she shares in the afflictions of the lowly, feels for their privations, and grants them her all-powerful intercession.

On Holy Thursday nothing can be more picturesque than the whole appearance of Mexico. No carriages are permitted, and the ladies being on foot, take the opportunity of displaying all the riches of their toilette. On this day velvets and satins are your only wear. Diamonds and pearls walk the streets. The mantillas are white or black blonde; the shoes white or colored satin. The petticoats are still rather short, but it would be hard to hide such small feet, and such still smaller shoes. "Il faut souffrir pour être belle," but *á quoi bon être belle?* if no one sees it. As for me, I *ventured* upon a lilac silk of Palmyre's, and a black mantilla.

The whole city was filled with picturesque figures.

After the higher Señoras, were to be remarked the common women, chiefly in clear white, very stiffly starched muslins, some very richly embroidered, and the petticoat trimmed with lace, white satin shoes, and the dresses extremely short, which in them looks very well. A reboso is thrown over all. Amongst these were many handsome faces, but in a still lower and more Indian class, with their gay colored petticoats, the faces were sometimes beautiful, and the figures more upright and graceful ; also they invariably walk well, whilst many of the higher classes, from tight shoes and want of custom, seem to feel pain in putting their feet to the ground.

But none could vie with the handsome Poblana peasants in their holiday dresses, some so rich and magnificent, that, remembering the warning of our ministerial friends, I am inclined to believe them more showy than respectable. The pure Indians, with whom the churches and the whole city is crowded, are as ugly as can be imagined ; a gentle, dirty and much-enduring race. Still with their babies at their backs, going along at their usual gentle trot, they add much to the general effect of the *coup d'œil.*

We walked to San Francisco about ten o'clock, and the body of the church being crowded, went up stairs to a private gallery with a gilded grating, belonging to the Countess de Santiago, and here we had the advantage of seats, besides a fine view of the whole. This church is very splendid, and the walls were hung with canvass paintings representing different passages of our Saviour's life ; his entry into Jerusalem, the woman of Samaria at the well, &c.,

which, with the palm trees, had a cool and oriental effect.

Before the altar, which was dazzling with jewels, was a representation of the Lord's Supper, not in painting, but in sculptured figures as large as life, habited in the Jewish dresses. The bishops and priests were in a blaze of gold and jewels. They were assisted during the ceremony by the young Count of Santiago. The music was extremely good, and the whole effect impressive. We visited several churches in the course of the day, and continued walking until four o'clock, when we went to dine with our friends the A——'s. After dinner, one of their coachmen, a handsome Mexican, in a superb dress, all embroidered in gold, was called up stairs to dance the *Jarabe* to us with a country girl. The dance is monotonous, but they acquitted themselves to perfection.

We then continued our pilgrimage through the city, though, as the sun had not yet set, we reserved our chief admiration until the churches should be illuminated. One, however, we entered at sun-set, which was worthy of remark — Santo Domingo. It looked like a little Paradise, or a story in the Arabian Nights. All the steps up to the altar were covered with pots of beautiful flowers; orange-trees, loaded with fruit and blossom, and rose-bushes in full bloom, glasses of colored water, and all kinds of fruit. Cages full of birds, singing delightfully, hung from the wall, and really fine paintings filled up the intervals. A gay carpet covered the floor, and in front of the altar, instead of the usual representation of the Saviour

crucified, a little Infant Jesus, beautifully done in wax, was lying amidst flowers, with little angels surrounding him. Add to this, the music of Romeo and Juliet, and you may imagine that it was more like a scene in an opera, than anything in a church. But certainly, as the rays of the setting sun streamed with a rosy light through the stained windows, throwing a glow over the whole; birds, and flowers, and fruit, paintings and angels, it was the prettiest and most fantastic scene I ever beheld, like something expressly got up for the benefit of children.

We did not kneel before each altar for more than three minutes, otherwise we should never have had time even to enter the innumerable churches which we visited in the course of the night. We next went to Santa Teresa la Nueva, a handsome church, belonging to a convent of strict nuns, which was now brilliantly illuminated; and here, as in all the churches, we made our way through the crowd with extreme difficulty. The number of *léperos* was astonishing, greatly exceeding that of well-dressed people. Before each altar was a figure, dreadful in the extreme, of the Saviour, as large as life, dressed in purple robe and crown of thorns, seated on the steps of the altar, the blood trickling from his wounds; each person, before leaving the church, devoutly kneeling to kiss his hands and feet. The nuns, amongst whom is a sister of Señor A——s, sung behind the grating in the gallery above, but were not visible.

One of the churches we visited, that of Santa Teresa, called the *Antigua*, stands upon the site formerly occupied by the palace of the father of the

unfortunate Montezuma. It was here that the Spaniards were quartered when they took Montezuma prisoner, and here Cortes found and appropriated the treasures of that family. In 1830, a bust of stone was found in the yard of the convent, which the workmen were digging up. Don Lucas Alaman, then Minister of Exterior Relations, offered a compensation to the nuns for the curious piece of antiquity, which they gladly gave up to the government, on whose account he acted. It is said to be the idol goddess of the Indians *Centeotl*, the goddess of medicine and medicinal herbs, also known by the name of *Temaz calteci*, or the "Grandmother of the Baths." A full account is given of her in one of the numbers of the "Mosaico Mejicano," as also of a square stone found in the same place, beautifully carved, and covered with hieroglyphical characters.

In the evening, towards the hour when the great procession was expected, we went to the balconies of the *Academia*, which command a fine view of the streets by which it was to pass. Till it arrived, we amused ourselves by looking over the *beaux restes* of former days, the collections of painting and sculpture, the fine plaster-casts that still remain, and the great volumes of fine engravings. It was dark when the procession made its appearance, which rendered the effect less gaudy and more striking. The Virgin, the Saints, the Holy Trinity, the Saviour in different passages of his life, imprisonment and crucifixion, were carried past in succession, represented by figures, magnificently dressed, placed on lofty scaffoldings of immense weight, supported by different bodies of

men. One is carried by the coachmen, another by the aguadores (water-carriers,) a third by the cargadores (porters,) a Herculean race.

First arrived the favorite protectress of all classes, the Virgin of Dolores, surmounted by a velvet canopy, seated on a glittering throne, attired in her sable robes, her brow surmounted by glittering rays, and contracted with an expression of agony; of all representations of the Virgin, the only one which is always lovely, however rudely carved; with that invariably beautiful face of terrible anguish. Then followed the Saviour, bearing the cross; the Saviour crucified, the Virgin supporting the head of her dying son; the Trinity, (the Holy Spirit represented by a dove); all the apostles, from St. Peter with the keys to Judas with the money-bag; and a long train of saints, all brilliantly illuminated and attended by an amazing crowd of priests, monks and laymen. However childish and superstitious all this may seem, I doubt whether it be not as well thus to impress certain religious truths on the minds of a people too ignorant to understand them by any other process. By the time the last saint and angel had vanished, the hour was advanced, and we had still to visit the illuminated churches. Being recommended to divest ourselves of our ornaments before wandering forth amongst the crowd, a matter of some moment to the Señora A——, who wore all her diamonds, we left our ear-rings, brooches, &c., in charge of the person who keeps the Academia, and recommenced our pilgrimage.

Innumerable were the churches we visited that

evening; the Cathedral, La Enseñanza, Jesus Maria, Santa Clara, Santa Brigida, San Hipolito, La Encarnacion, the five churches of San Francisco, &c. &c., a list without an end, kneeling for a short space of time before each blazing altar, for the more churches one visits, the more meritorious is the devotion. The cathedral was the first we entered, and its magnificence struck us with amazement. Its gold and silver and jewels, its innumerable ornaments and holy vessels, the rich dresses of the priests, all seemed burning in almost intolerable brightness. The high altar was the most magnificent; the second, with its pure white marble pillars, the most imposing.

The crowd was immense, but we made our way slowly through it to the foot of each altar, where the people were devoutly kissing the Saviour's hand or the hem of his garment; or beating their breasts before the mild image of Our Lady of Grief. Each church had vied with the other in putting forth all its splendor of jewelry, of lights, of dresses, and of music.

In the church of Santa Clara, attached to the convent of the same name, small but elegant, with its pillars of white marble and gold, one voice of angelic sweetness was singing behind the grating, alone, and in the midst of a most deathlike stillness. It sounded like the notes of a nightingale, in a cage. I could have listened for hours, but our time was limited, and we set off anew. Fortunately the evening was delightful, and the moon shining brightly. We visited about twenty churches in succession. In all, the organ was pealing, the blaze of light overpower-

ing, the magnificence of jewels and crimson velvet and silver and gold dazzling, the crowd suffocating, the incense blinding.

The prettiest effect in every church was caused by the orange-trees and rose-bushes, which covered the steps of the altars, up to where the magnificence of the altar itself blazed out; and the most picturesque effect was produced by the different orders of monks in their gowns and hoods, either lying on their faces or standing ranged with torches, like figures carved in stone.

In the passage leading to most of the churches was a table, at which several ladies of the highest rank sat collecting alms for the poor. The fair *quêtenses* had not been very successful, and that chiefly amongst the lower classes. The fatigue was terrible, walking for so many hours on that bad pavement with thin satin shoes; so that at length our feet seemed to move mechanically, and we dropped on our knees before each altar, like machines touched by a spring, and rose again with no small effort. Of all the churches we entered that night, the cathedral was the most magnificent, but the most beautiful and tasteful was San Francisco. The crowd there was so dense, that we were almost carried off our feet, and were obliged, in defiance of all rule, to take the arms of our *caballeros*. Still it was worth the trouble of making our way through it, to see such a superbly illuminated altar. It was now eleven o'clock, and the crowd were breaking up, as the churches are shut before midnight. In one corner of the middle aisle, near the door, was the representation of a

prison, from which issued a stream of soft music, and at the window was a figure of Christ in chains, his eyes bandaged, and a Jew on each side; the chains hanging from his hands, and clanking as if with the motion of his arms. The rush here was immense. Numbers of people were kneeling before the window of the prison, and kissing the chains and beating their breasts with every appearance of contrition and devotion. This was the night before the Crucifixion, and the last scene of the Holy Thursday.

We reached home hardly able to stand. I never felt more dazzled, bewildered and sleepy, but I was wakened by finding a packet of letters from home, which brought back my thoughts, or rather carried them away to very different lands.

On Good Friday, a day of sorrow and humiliation, the scene in the morning is very different. The great sacrifice is complete — the Immortal has died a mortal death. The ladies all issue forth in mourning, and the churches look sad and wan after their last night's brilliancy. The heat was intense. We went to San Francisco, again to the Tribuna of the Countess de Santiago, to see the Adoration and Procession of the Cross, which was very fine.

But the most beautiful and original scene was presented towards sunset in the great square, and it is doubtful whether any other city in the world could present a coup d'œil of equal brilliancy. Having been offered the entrée to some apartments in the palace, we took our seats on the balconies, which commanded a view of the whole. The Plaza itself, even on ordinary days, is a noble square, and but for its one fault, a row of shops called the Parian, which

breaks its uniformity, would be nearly unrivalled. Every object is interesting. The eye wanders from the Cathedral to the house of Cortes (the Monte Pio,) and from thence to a range of fine buildings with lofty arcades, to the west. From our elevated situation, we could see all the different streets that branch out from the square, covered with gay crowds pouring in that direction to see another great procession, which was expected to pass in front of the palace. Booths filled with refreshments, and covered with green branches and garlands of flowers, were to be seen in all directions, surrounded by a crowd who were quenching their thirst with orgeat, *chia*,[1] lemonade, or pulque. The whole square, from the Cathedral to the Portales, and from the Monte Pio to the Palace, was covered with thousands and tens of thousands of figures, all in their gayest dresses, and as the sun poured his rays down upon their gaudy colors, they looked like armies of living tulips. Here was to be seen a group of ladies, some with black gowns and mantillas; others, now that their church-going duty was over, equipped in velvet or satin, with their hair dressed; and beautiful hair they have; some leading their children by the hand, dressed . . . . alas! how they were dressed! Long velvet gowns trimmed with blonde; diamond earrings, high French caps befurbelowed with lace and flowers, or turbans with plumes of feathers. Now and then the head of a little thing that could hardly waddle alone, might have belonged to an English dowager duchess in her opera box. Some had ex-

[1] A drink made of the seed of the plant of that name.

traordinary bonnets, also with flowers and feathers, and as they toddled along, top heavy, one would have thought they were little old women, till a glimpse was caught of their lovely little brown faces and black eyes. Now and then, a little girl, simply dressed with a short frock, and long black hair plaited down and uncovered, would trip along, a very model of grace amongst the small caricatures. The children here are generally beautiful, their features only too perfect and regular for the face "to fulfil the promise of its spring." They have little color, with swimming black or hazel eyes, and long lashes resting on the clear pale cheek, and a perfect mass of fine dark hair of the straight Spanish or Indian kind plaited down behind.

As a contrast to the Señoras, with their overdressed beauties, were the poor Indian women, trotting across the square, their black hair plaited with dirty red ribbon, a piece of woollen cloth wrapped round them, and a little mahogany baby hanging behind, its face upturned to the sky, and its head going jerking along, somehow without its neck being dislocated. The most resigned expression on earth is that of an Indian baby. All the groups we had seen promenading the streets the day before, were here collected by hundreds; the women of the shopkeeper class, or it may be lower, in their smart white embroidered gowns, with their white satin shoes, and neat feet and ankles, and rebosos or bright shawls thrown over their heads; the peasants and countrywomen, with their short petticoats of two colors, generally scarlet and yellow; (for they are

most anti-quakerish in their attire,) thin satin shoes and lace-trimmed chemises, or bronze-colored damsels, all crowned with flowers, strolling along with their admirers, and tingling their light guitars. And above all, here and there a flashing Poblana, with a dress of real value and much taste, and often with a face and figure of extraordinary beauty; especially the figure; large and yet *élancée*, with a bold coquettish eye, and a beautiful little brown foot, shewn off by the white satin shoe; the petticoat of her dress frequently fringed and embroidered in real massive gold, and a reboso either shot with gold, or a bright colored China crape shawl, coquettishly thrown over her head. We saw several whose dresses could not have cost less than five hundred dollars.

Add to this motley crowd, men dressed à la Mexicaine, with their large ornamented hats and serapes, or embroidered jackets, sauntering along, smoking their cigars, léperos in rags, Indians in blankets, officers in uniform, priests in their shovel hats, monks of every order; Frenchmen exercising their wit upon the passers-by, Englishmen looking cold and philosophical, Germans gazing through their spectacles, mild and mystical, Spaniards seeming pretty much at home, and abstaining from remarks; and it may be conceived that the scene at least presented variety. Sometimes the tinkling of the bell announced the approach of *Nuestro Amo*. Instantly the whole crowd are on their knees, crossing themselves devoutly. Two men who were fighting below the window, suddenly dropt down side by side. Dis-

putes were hushed, flirtations arrested, and to the busy hum of voices succeeded a profound silence. Only the rolling of the coach-wheels and the sound of the little bell were heard.

No sooner had it passed, than the talkers and the criers recommenced with fresh vigor. The venders of hot chestnuts and cooling beverages plied their trade more briskly than ever. A military band struck up an air from Semiramus; and the noise of the innumerable *matracas* (rattles) some of wood and some of silver, with which every one is armed during the last days of the holy week, broke forth again as if by magic, while again commenced the sale of the *Judases*, fireworks in the form of that arch-traitor, which are sold on the evening of Good Friday, and let off on Saturday morning. Hundreds of these hideous figures were held above the crowd, by men who carried them tied together on long poles. An ugly, misshapen monster they represent the betrayer to have been. When he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, did he dream that in the lapse of ages, his effigies should be held up to the execration of a Mexican mob, of an unknown people in undiscovered countries beyond the seas? — A secret bargain, perhaps made whisperingly in a darkened chamber with the fierce Jewish rulers; but now shouted forth in the ears of the descendants of Montezuma and Cortes!

But the sound of a distant hymn rose on the air, and shortly after there appeared, advancing towards the square, a long and pompous retinue of mitred priests, with banners and crucifixes and gorgeous

imagery, conducting a procession in which figures representing scenes concerning the death of our Saviour, were carried by on platforms, as they were the preceding evening. There was the Virgin in mourning at the foot of the cross — the Virgin in glory, — and more saints, and more angels — St. Michael and the Dragon, &c. &c., a glittering and innumerable train. Not a sound was heard as the figures were carried slowly onwards in their splendid robes, lighted by thousands of tapers, which mingled their unnatural glare with the fading light of day.

As the miserere was to be performed in the cathedral late in the evening, we went there, though with small hopes of making our way through the tremendous crowd. Having at length been admitted through a private entrance *per favor*, we made our way into the body of the church; but the crowd was so intolerable, that we thought of abandoning our position, when we were seen and recognised by some of the priests, and conducted to a railed-off enclosure near the shrine of the Virgin, with the luxury of a Turkey carpet. Here, separated from the crowd, we sat down in peace, on the ground. The gentlemen were accommodated with high-backed chairs beside some ecclesiastics; for men may sit on chairs or benches in church, but women must kneel or sit on the ground. Why? "*Quien sabe?*" "Who knows?" is all the satisfaction I have ever obtained on that point.

The music began with a crash that wakened me out of an agreeable slumber into which I had gradually fallen; and such discordance of instruments

and voices, such confusion worse confounded, such inharmonious harmony, never before deafened mortal ears. The very spheres seemed out of tune, and rolling and crashing over each other. I could have cried Miserere! with the loudest; and in the midst of all the undrilled band, was a *music-master*, with violin-stick uplifted, rushing desperately from one to the other, in vain endeavoring to keep time, and frightened at the clamor he himself had been instrumental in raising; like Phæton entrusted with his unmanageable coursers. The noise was so great as to be really alarming; and the heat was severe in proportion. The calm face of the Virgin seemed to look reproachfully down. We were thankful when at the conclusion of this stormy appeal for mercy, we were able to make our way into the fresh air and soft moonlight, through the confusion and squeezing at the doors, where it was rumored that a soldier had killed a baby with his bayonet. A bad place for poor little babies — decidedly.

Outside, in the square, it was cool and agreeable. A military band was playing airs from the Norma, and the womankind were sitting on the stones of the railing, or wandering about and finishing their day's work by a quiet flirtation *au clair de la lune*.

It was now eleven o'clock, and the pulquerias were thrown open for the refreshment of the faithful, and though hitherto much order had prevailed, it was not likely to endure much longer; notwithstanding which, we had the imprudence to walk unattended to our own house at San Fernando. In the centre of the city there seemed no danger. People were still walk-

ing, and a few still drinking at the lighted booths; but when we arrived at the lower part of the Alameda, all was still, and as we walked outside under the long shadows of the trees, I expected every moment to be attacked, and wished we were anywhere, even on the silvery top of Popocatepetl! We passed several crowded pulquerias, where some were drinking and others drunk. Arrived at the arches, we saw from time to time a suspicious blanketed figure half hid by the shadow of the wall. A few doors from our own domicile, was a pulque shop filled with léperos, of whom some were standing at the door, shrouded in their blankets. It seemed to me we should never pass them, but we walked fast, and reached our door in safety. Here we thundered in vain. The porter was asleep, and for nearly ten minutes, we heard voices within, male and female, ineffectually endeavoring to persuade the heavy-headed Cerberus to relinquish his keys. It would have been a choice moment for our friends, had any of them wished to accost us; but either they had not observed us, or perhaps they thought that C——n walking so late must have been armed; or perhaps, more charitable construction, they had profited by the solemnities of the day.

We got in at last, and I felt thankful enough for shelter and safety, and as wearied of the day's performances as you may be in reading a description of them.

Next morning, Sabado de Gloria, I could not persuade myself to go as far as the Plaza, to see the Iscariots explode. At a distance we listened to the

hissing and crackling of the fire-works, the ringing of all the bells, and the thundering of artillery; and knew by the hum of busy voices, and the rolling of carriages, that the Holy Week was numbered with the past. . . .

We hear that it is in contemplation amongst the English here, headed by their Minister, to give a ball in the Mineria, to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria, which will be turning these splendid halls to some account. . . .

I have some intention of giving a series of weekly soirées, but am assured that they will not succeed, because hitherto such parties have failed. As a reason, is given the extravagant notions of the ladies in point of dress, and it is said that nothing but a hall where they can wear their jewels and a toilette therewith consistent, will please them; that a lady of high rank who had been in Madrid, having proposed simple tertulias and white muslin dresses, half the men in Mexico were ruined that year by the embroidered French and India muslins bought by their wives during this reign of simplicity; the idea of a plain white muslin, a dress worn by any *lépera*, never having struck them as possible. Nevertheless, we can but make the attempt.

We propose going next week to Tulansingo, where our friends the —— have a country place, and from thence we proceed to visit the mines of Real del Monte.

23*d.* — On Monday we gave a Tertulia, which, notwithstanding all predictions, went off remarkably well, and consisted of nearly all the pleasantest people

in Mexico. We had music, dancing and cards, and at three in the morning, the German cotillon was still in full vigor. Every one was disposed to be amused, and, moreover, the young ladies were dressed very simply; most of them in plain white muslins. There was but a small sprinkling of diamonds, and that chiefly among the elderly part of the community Still it is said that the novelty alone induced them to come, and that weekly soirées will not succeed. We shall try. Besides which, the Lady of the —— Minister proposes being *At Home* on Wednesday evenings; the Lady of the —— Minister takes another evening; I, a third, and we shall see what can be effected.

LETTER THE FIFTEENTH.

Letter from the Archbishop — Visit to the "*Encarnacion*" — Reception — Description — The Novices — Convent-supper — Picturesque scene — Sonata on the Organ — Attempt at robbery — Alarms of the household — Visit to San Agustin — Anonymous letter — The Virgin *de los Remedios* — Visit to the Chapel — The Padre — The Image — Anecdote of the large pearl — A mine.

24th.

THE Archbishop has not only granted me permission to visit the convents, but permits me to take two ladies along with me, of which I have been informed by the Minister, Señor C——o, in a very amiable note, just received, enclosing one from Señor Posada, which I translate for your edification.

To His Excellency, Señor Don J. de D. C——o.

April 24th, 1842.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND COMPANION:

The Abbess and Nuns of the Convent of the Encarnacion are now prepared to receive the visit of our three pilgrims, next Sunday, at half past four in the afternoon, and should that day not suit them, let them mention what day will be convenient.

Afterwards we shall arrange their visit to the Concepcion, Enseñanza Antigua, and Jesus Maria, which

are the best, and I shall let you know, and we shall agree upon the days and hours most suitable.

I remain your affectionate friend and *Capellan*,

MANUEL POSADA.

27*th*. — Accordingly, on Sunday afternoon, we drove to the *Encarnacion*, the most splendid and richest convent in Mexico, excepting perhaps la Concepcion. If it were in any other country, I might mention the surpassing beauty of the evening, but as except in the rainy season, which has not yet begun, the evenings are always beautiful, the weather leaves no room for description. The sky always blue, the air always soft, the flowers always blossoming, the birds always singing; Thomson never could have written his "Seasons" here. We descended at the convent gate, were admitted by the portress, and received by several nuns, their faces closely covered with a double crape veil. We were then led into a spacious hall, hung with handsome lustres, and adorned with various Virgins and Saints magnificently dressed; and here the eldest, a very dignified old lady, lifted her veil, the others following her example, and introduced herself as the *Madre Vicaria;* bringing us many excuses from the old Abbess, who having an inflammation in her eyes, was confined to her cell. She and another reverend mother, and a group of elderly dames, tall, thin and stately, then proceeded to inform us, that the Archbishop had, in person, given orders for our reception, and that they were prepared to show us the whole establishment.

The dress is a long robe of very fine white casi-

mere, a thick black crape veil, and long rosary. The dress of the novices is the same, only that the veil is white. For the first half hour or so, I fancied, that along with their politeness, was mingled a good deal of restraint, caused perhaps by the presence of a foreigner, and especially of an Englishwoman. My companions they knew well; the Señorita —— having even passed some months there. However this may have been, the feeling seemed gradually to wear away. Kindness or curiosity triumphed; their questions became unceasing; and before the visit was concluded, I was addressed as "*mi vida*" my life, by the whole establishment. Where was I born? Where had I lived? What convents had I seen? Which did I prefer, the convents in France, or those in Mexico? Which were largest? Which had the best garden? &c., &c. Fortunately, I could, with truth, give the preference to their convent, as to spaciousness and magnificence, over any I ever saw.

The Mexican style of building is peculiarly advantageous for recluses; the great galleries and courts affording them a constant supply of fresh air, while the fountains sound so cheerfully, and the garden in this climate of perpetual spring affords them such a constant source of enjoyment all the year round, that one pities their secluded state much less here than in any other country.

This convent is in fact a palace. The garden, into which they led us first, is kept in good order, with its stone walks, stone benches, and an ever-playing and sparkling fountain. The trees were bending with fruit, and they pulled quantities of the

most beautiful flowers for us; sweet pease and roses, with which all gardens here abound, carnations, jasmine and heliotrope. It was a pretty picture to see them wandering about, or standing in groups in this high-walled garden, while the sun was setting behind the hills, and the noise of the city was completely excluded, everything breathing repose and contentment.

Most of the halls in the convent are noble rooms. We visited the whole, from the refectory to the *botica*, and admired the extreme cleanness of everything, especially of the immense kitchen, which seems hallowed from the approach even of a particle of dust; this circumstance partly accounted for by the fact that each nun has a servant, and some have two; for this is not one of the strictest orders. The convent is rich; each novice at her entrance pays five thousand dollars into the common stock. There are about thirty nuns and ten novices.

The prevailing sin in a convent generally seems to be pride;

"The pride that apes humility;"

and it is perhaps nearly inseparable from the conventual state. Set apart from the rest of the world, they, from their little world, are too apt to look down with contempt upon all who do not belong to their community, a contempt which may be mingled with envy, or modified by pity, but must be unsuited to a true Christian spirit.

The novices were presented to us — poor little entrapped things! who really believe they will be let

out at the end of a year if they should grow tired, as if they would ever be permitted to grow tired! The two eldest and most reverend ladies are sisters, thin, tall and stately, with high noses, and remains of beauty. They have been in the convent since they were eight years old, (which is remarkable, as sisters are rarely allowed to profess in the same establishment,) and consider *La Encarnacion* as a small piece of heaven upon earth. There were some handsome faces amongst them, and one whose expression and eyes were singularly lovely, but truth to say, these were rather exceptions to the general rule.

Having visited the whole building, and admired one virgin's blue satin and pearls, and another's black velvet and diamonds, sleeping holy infants, saints, paintings, shrines and confessionals, having even climbed up to the Azotea, which commands a magnificent view, we came at length to a large hall, decorated with paintings and furnished with antique high-backed arm-chairs, where a very elegant supper, lighted up and ornamented, greeted our astonished eyes; cakes, chocolate, ices, creams, custards, tarts, jellies, blancmangers, orange and lemonade, and other profane dainties, ornamented with gilt paper cut into little flags, &c. I was placed in a chair that might have served for a pope, under a holy family; the Señora —— and the Señorita —— on either side. The elder nuns in stately array, occupied the other arm-chairs, and looked like statues carved in stone. A young girl, a sort of pensionnaire, brought in a little harp without pedals, and while we discussed cakes and ices, sung different

ballads with a good deal of taste. The elder nuns helped us to everything, but tasted nothing themselves. The younger nuns and the novices were grouped upon a mat *á la Turque*, and a more picturesque scene altogether one could scarcely see.

The young novices, with their white robes, white veils and black eyes, the severe and dignified *madres* with their long dresses and mournful-looking black veils and rosaries, the veiled figures occasionally flitting along the corridor; — ourselves in contrast, with our *worldly* dresses and colored ribbands; and the great hall lighted by one immense lamp that hung from the ceiling — I felt transported three centuries back, and half afraid that the whole would flit away, and prove a mere vision, a waking dream.

A gossiping old nun, who hospitably filled my plate with everything, gave me the enclosed *flag* cut in gilt paper, which, together with her custards and jellies, looked less unreal. They asked many questions in regard to Spanish affairs, and were not to be consoled for the defeat of Don Carlos, which they feared would be an end of the true religion in Spain.

After supper, we proceeded up stairs to the choir, (where the nuns attend public worship, and which looks down upon the handsome convent church,) to try the organ. I was set down to a Sonata of Mozart's, the servants blowing the bellows. It seems to me that I made more noise than music, for the organ is very old, perhaps as old as the convent, which dates three centuries back. However, the nuns were pleased, and after they had sung a hymn, we re-

turned below. I was rather sorry to leave them, and felt as if I could have passed some time there very contentedly; but it was near nine o'clock, and we were obliged to take our departure; so having been embraced very cordially by the whole community, we left the hospitable walls of the Encarnacion. . . . .

28th.—Last evening we were sitting at home very quietly, about ten o'clock, C——n, Monsieur de —— of the —— Legation and I, when A—— rushed into the room all dishevelled. "Come quickly, sir! Robbers are breaking open the kitchen door!" A succession of feminine shrieks in the distance, added effect to her words. C——n jumped up, ran for his pistols, gave one to Monsieur de ——, called up the soldiers, but no robbers appeared. The kitchen-door was indeed open, and the trembling *galopina* attested, that being in the kitchen alone, dimly lighted by one small lamp, three men, all armed, had entered, and had rushed out again on hearing her give the alarm. We somewhat doubted her assertions, but the next morning found that the men had in fact escaped by the Azotea, a great assistance to all Mexican depredators. At the end of this row of houses, the people ran out and fired upon them, but without effect. The house of the old Countess of S—— F—— has been broken into, her porter wounded, report says killed, and her plate carried off. In the mean time, our soldiers watch in the kitchen, a pair of loaded pistols adorn the table, a double-barrelled gun stands in the corner, and a bull-dog growls in the gallery. This little passing

visit to us was probably caused by the arrival of some large boxes from London, especially of a very fine harp and piano, both *Erard's*, which I had the pleasure of seeing unpacked this morning, and which, in spite of jolting and bad roads, have arrived in perfect condition. . . . .

Thus far I had written, it being now the evening, and I sitting alone, when a succession of shrieks arose, even more awful than those which alarmed us last night. At the same time the old *galopina*, her daughter, and a French girl who lives here, rushed shouting along the gallery; not a word they said comprehensible, but something concerning "a robber in black, with men at his back, who had burst open the door." At the noise, the whole household had assembled. One ran this way, one ran that. A little French *teinturier*, who it appeared had been paying the maids a polite visit, seized the loaded gun; the footman took a pistol, and hid himself behind the porter; A——, like a second Joan of Arc, appeared with a rusty sabre; the soldiers rushed up with their bayonets; the coachman stood aloof with nothing; the porter led up the rear, holding a large dog by the collar; but no robber appears; and the girls are all sobbing and crying because we doubt their having seen one. Galopina the younger, shedding tears in torrents, swears to the man. Galopina the elder, enveloped in her reboso, swears to any number of men; and the *recamerera* has cried herself into a fit between fear and indignation.

Such is the agreeable state of things about nine o'clock this evening, for one real attempt to enter

the house, invariably gives rise to a thousand imaginary attacks and fanciful alarms. . . . .

After many attempts at walking, I have very nearly abandoned it, but take a great deal of exercise both on horseback and in the carriage, which last, on account of the ill-paved condition of the streets, affords rather more exercise than the former. I drove out this morning, in an open carriage, with the Señorita E—— to her country-house at San Agustin, the gambling emporium. But the famous annual fête does not take place till Whitsunday, and the pretty country villas there are at present abandoned. We walked in the garden till the sun became insupportable. The fragrance of the roses and jasmine was almost overpowering. There are trees of mille-fleur roses; heliotrope and honeysuckle cover every pillar, and yellow jasmine trails over everything. . . . .

Found on my return an anonymous letter, begging me to "beware of my cook!" and signed *Fernandez*. Having shown it to some gentlemen who dined here, one thought it might be a plan of the robbers to get rid of the cook, whom they considered in their way; another, with more probability, that it was merely a plan of the attentive Señor Fernandez to get the cook's place for himself. . . .

We went lately to pay a visit to the celebrated Virgin de los Remedios, the *Gachupina*, the Spanish patroness, and rival of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This virgin was brought over by Cortes, and when he displaced the Indian idols in the great Temple of Mexico, caused them to be broken in pieces, and the

sanctuary to be purified, he solemnly placed there a crucifix and this image of the virgin; then kneeling before it, gave solemn thanks to heaven, which had permitted him thus to adore the Most High, in a place so long profaned by the most cruel idolatries.

It is said that this image was brought to Mexico by a soldier of Cortes's army, called Villafuerte, and that the day succeeding the terrible *Noche Triste*, it was concealed by him in the place where it was afterwards discovered. At all events, the image disappeared, and nothing further was known of it, until, on the top of a barren and treeless mountain, in the heart of a large maguey, she was found by a fortunate Indian. Her restoration was joyfully hailed by the Spaniards. A church was erected on the spot. A priest was appointed to take charge of the miraculous image. Her fame spread abroad. Gifts of immense value were brought to her shrine. A treasurer was appointed to take care of her jewels; a camarista to superintend her rich wardrobe. No rich dowager died in peace until she had bequeathed to Our Lady of Los Remedios her largest diamond, or her richest pearl. In seasons of drought she is brought in from her dwelling in the mountain, and carried in procession through the streets. The Viceroy himself on foot used to lead the holy train. One of the highest rank drives the chariot in which she is seated. In succession she visits the principal convents, and as she is carried through the cloistered precincts, the nuns are ranged on their knees in humble adoration. Plentiful rains immediately follow her arrival. ——, who accompanied us, has on

several occasions filled the office of her coachman, by which means he has seen the interior of most of the convents in Mexico. It is true that there came a time, when the famous curate Hidalgo, the prime mover of the Revolution, having taken as his standard an image of the virgin of Guadalupe, a rivalry arose between her and the Spanish virgin; and Hidalgo having been defeated and forced to fly, the image of the Virgin de los Remedios was conducted to Mexico dressed as a General, and invoked as the Patroness of Spain. Later still, the virgin herself was denounced as a Gachupina! her General's sash boldly torn from her by the valiant General ——, who also signed her passport, with an order for her to leave the Republic. However, she was again restored to her honors, and still retains her treasurers, her camarista, and sanctum sanctorum.

Being desirous of seeing this celebrated image, we set off, one fine afternoon, in a carriage of ——'s drawn by six unbroken horses, accompanied by him and his lady, and performed four leagues of bad road in an incredibly short space of time. The horses themselves were in an evident state of astonishment, for after kicking and plunging, and as they imagined running away, they found themselves driven much faster than they had the slightest intention of going: so after a little while they acknowledged in ——'s capital coachman, *une main de maitre.*

The mountain is barren and lonely, but the view from its summit is beautiful, commanding the whole plain. The church is old and not very remarkable, yet a picturesque object, as it stands in its gray soli-

tariness, with one or two trees beside it, of which one without leaves was entirely covered with the most brilliant scarlet flowers. Señor —— having been the Virgin's coachman, the Señora —— being the daughter of her camarista, and C——n the Minister from the land of her predilection, we were not astonished at the distinguished reception which we met with from the reverend padre, the guardian of the mountain. The church within is handsome; and above the altar is a copy of the original Virgin. After we had remained there a little while, we were admitted into the Sanctum, where the identical Virgin of Cortes, with a large silver maguey, occupies her splendid shrine. The priest retired and put on his robes, and then returning, and all kneeling before the altar, he recited the credo. This over, he mounted the steps, and opening the shrine where the Virgin was encased, knelt down and removed her in his arms. He then presented her to each of us in succession, every one kissing the hem of her satin robe. She was afterwards replaced with the same ceremony.

The image is a wooden doll, about a foot high, holding in its arms an infant Jesus, both faces evidently carved with a rude penknife; two holes for the eyes, and another for the mouth. This doll was dressed in blue satin and pearls, with a crown upon her head and a quantity of hair fastened on to the crown. No Indian idol could be much uglier. As she has been a good deal scratched and destroyed in the lapse of ages, C——n observed that he was astonished they had not tried to restore her a little.

To this the padre replied, that the attempt had been made by several artists, each one of whom had sickened and died. He also mentioned as one of her miracles, that living on a solitary mountain, she had never been robbed; but I fear the good padre is somewhat *oblivious*, as this sacrilege has happened more than once. On one occasion, a crowd of lépe-ros being collected, and the image carried round to be kissed, one of them, affecting intense devotion, bit off the large pearl that adorned her dress in front, and before the theft was discovered, he had mingled with the crowd and escaped. When reminded of the circumstance, the padre said it was true, but that the thief was a *Frenchman*. After taking leave of the Virgin, we visited the padre in his own old house, attached to the church, where his only attendant, as usual among padres, is an old woman.

We then made our way on foot down a steep hill, stopping to admire some noble stone arches, the remains of an aqueduct built by the Spaniards for conveying water from one mountain to the other; and with an Indian for our guide, visited a newly-discovered, though anciently-opened mine, said to be of silver, and which had until lately been covered with rubbish. We groped through it, and found vaults and excavations and a deep pit of water. C——n got some Indians to break off pieces of stone for him, which were put into a sack, and sent home for examination. We were so tired of our walk down this steep and mountainous path, that on our return I mounted a horse with a man's saddle, belonging to one of the servants, and contrived to keep on, while

it climbed up the perpendicular ascent. As this seemed rather a selfish proceeding while the others walked, I invited the Señora —— to mount also in front, which she did, and the path being almost perpendicular, my head nearly touched the ground, which certainly made the seat not over safe or easy. However, we reached the top of the mountain in safety, though somewhat exhausted with laughing, and were driven home with the speed of a rail-car.

LETTER THE SIXTEENTH.

Mexico in May — Leave Mexico for Santiago — Coach of Charles Tenth — Mexican Travelling — General Aspect of the country — Village of Santa Clara — Robbers' House — Temples of the Sun and Moon — San Juan — Mexican Posada — Schoolhouse — Skulls — Hard fare — Travelling Dress — Sopayuca — Military Administrador — Santiago — Matadors and Picadors — Evenings in the country — Dances — Mexican Songs — Cempoala — Plaza de Toros — Skill of the Horsemen — Omatusco — Accident — Tulansingo — Beautiful Garden — Mexican Dishes — Fruits — Horses — Games of Forfeits — Ranchera's Dress — Young Girls and their admirers — Verses — Knowledge of simple medicine — Indian Baths — Hidden treasures — Anecdote.

SANTIAGO, 6th May.

BEFORE the setting in of the rainy season, we accepted of the invitation of our friends the ——'s, to visit their different haciendas, as in a short time the roads will become nearly impassable. The country in May is perhaps at its highest beauty, or even a little earlier; as already the great blow of roses is nearly over; *au reste* there are roses all the year round, though more in December than in July. And this, by the way, is rather a source of disappointment to the unwary traveller. He arrives in December, and finds the gardens full of flowers. "If this be the case in December," says he to himself, "what will it be in May?" May comes — the roses are over, and the chief flowers in the gardens are dahlias

and marigolds, our autumnal flowers — September, and these autumnal flowers still bloom, and with them you have mignonette and roses, and then pinks and jasmine, and other flowers. In fact there seems to be no particular season for anything.

The weather at present is neither warm nor cold, but colder here than in Mexico, and when it does not rain, it is lovely. Already there has been much rain, and the torrents are so swelled, that there was some doubt as to whether our carriages could pass them.

Yesterday, at five in the morning, we left Mexico, in a coach once the property of Charles the Tenth. "Sic transit," &c.; and a most luxurious travelling carriage is that of his Ex-Majesty, entirely covered with gilding, save where the lilies of France surmount the crown, (sad emblems of the fallen dynasty!) lined with white satin, with violet-colored binding, the satin cushions most excellently stuffed; large, commodious, and with a movement as soft as that of a gondola.

A Frenchman bought it on a speculation, and brought it here for sale. In former days, from its gilding and showy appearance, it would have brought any price; but the taste for gaudy equipages has gone by since the introduction of foreign and especially of English carriages; and the present proprietor, who bought it for its intrinsic good qualities, paid but a moderate sum for it. In this carriage, drawn by six strong horses, with two first-rate coachmen, and several out-riders well armed, we went along at great speed. The drivers, dressed Mexican

fashion, with all their accoutrements smart and new, looked very picturesque. Jackets and trowsers of deer-skin, the jackets embroidered in green, with hanging silver buttons, the trowsers also embroidered and slit up the side of the leg, trimmed with silver buttons, and showing an under pair of unbleached linen; these, with the postilions' boots, and great hats with gold rolls, form a dress which would *faire fureur*, if some adventurous Mexican would venture to display it on the streets of London.

We left the city by the gate of Guadalupe, and passed by the great cathedral, our road lying over the marshy plains once covered by the waters of Lake Tezcuco.

To the east lay the great Lake, its broad waters shining like a sheet of molten silver, and the two great volcanoes; the rising sun forming a crown of rays on the white brow of Popocatapetl.

To describe once for all the general aspect of the country on this side of the valley of Mexico; suffice it to say, that there is a universal air of dreariness, vastness and desolation. The country is flat, but always enlivened by the surrounding mountains, like an uninteresting painting in a diamond frame; and yet it is not wholly uninteresting. It has a character peculiar to itself, great plains of maguey, with its huts with uncultivated patches, that have once been gardens, still filled with flowers and choked with weeds; the huts themselves, generally of mud, yet not unfrequently of solid stone, roofless and windowless, with traces of having been fine buildings in former days; the complete solitude, unbroken except

by the passing Indian, certainly as much in a state of savage nature as the lower class of Mexicans were when Cortes first traversed these plains; — with the same character, gentle and cowardly, false and cunning, as weak animals are apt to be by nature, and indolent and improvident as men are in a fine climate; ruins everywhere — here a Viceroy's country palace, serving as a tavern, where the mules stop to rest, and the drivers to drink pulque — there, a whole village crumbling to pieces; roofless houses, broken-down walls and arches, an old church — the remains of a convent. . . . For leagues, scarcely a tree to be seen; then a clump of the graceful Arbol de Peru, or one great cypress — long strings of mules and asses, with their drivers — pasture-fields with cattle — then again whole tracts of maguey, as far as the eye can reach; no roads worthy of the name, but a passage made between fields of maguey, bordered by crumbling down low stone walls, causing a jolting from which not even the easy movement of Charles the Tenth's coach can save us. But the horses go at full gallop, accustomed to go through and over everything.

The first village we saw was Santa Clara, to our left, lying at the foot of some dark hills, with its white church and flat-roofed or no-roofed houses. There being no shade, frequently not a tree for leagues, the sun and dust were disagreeable, and became more so as the day advanced. Here it came to pass, that travelling rapidly over these hot and dusty plains, the wheels of our carriage began to smoke. No house was in sight — no water within

ken. It was a case of difficulty; when suddenly —— recollected that not far from thence was an old rancho, a deserted farm-house, at present occupied by robbers; and having ordered the coachman to drive to within a few hundred yards of this house, he sent a servant on horseback with a *medio* (fourpence) to bring some water, which was treating the robbers like honorable men. The man galloped off, and shortly returned with a can full of water, which he carried back when the fire was extinguished.

Meanwhile we examined, as well as we could, the external appearance of the robbers' domicile, which was an old half-ruined house, standing alone on the plain, with no tree near it. Several men, with guns, were walking up and down before the house — sporting-looking characters, but rather dirty — apparently either waiting for some expected *game*, or going in search of it. Women, with rebosos, were carrying water, and walking amongst them. There were also a number of dogs. The well-armed men who accompanied us, and the name of ——, so well known in these parts, that once when his carriage was surrounded by robbers, he merely mentioned who he was, and they retreated with many apologies for their mistake, precluded all danger of an attack — but woe to the solitary horseman or unescorted carriage that may pass thereby! Nor, indeed, are they always in the same mood; for Señor ——'s houses have been frequently attacked in his absence, and his hacienda at Santiago once stood a regular siege, the robbers being at length repulsed by the bravery of his servants.

We set off again *au grand galop*, drivers and outriders giving, from time to time, the most extraordinary shrieks to encourage the horses and to amuse themselves, wild and shrill enough to frighten any civilized quadruped. The road grew more picturesque as we advanced, and at length our attention was arrested by the sight of the two great pyramids, which rise to the east of the town of San Juan Teotihuacan, which are mentioned by Humboldt, and have excited the curiosity and attention of every succeeding traveller. These huge masses were consecrated to the sun and moon, which, in the time of Cortes, were there represented by two vast stone idols, covered with gold. The conquerors made use of the gold, and broke the idols in pieces, by order of the first bishop of Mexico. Unfortunately, our time was too limited to give them more than a passing observation. Fragments of obsidian, in the form of knives and of arrows, with which the priests opened the breasts of their human victims, are still to be found there; and numerous small idols made of baked clay, are to be seen both there and in the plains adjoining. The Indians rather dislike to guide travellers to these pyramids, and their reluctance to do so has increased the popular belief of the existence of great concealed treasures near or in them.

The whole plain on which these great pyramids stand, was formerly called Micoatl, or the Pathway of the Dead; and the hundreds of smaller pyramids which surround the larger ones, (the Temples of the Sun and Moon,) are symetrically disposed in wide streets, forming a great burial-plain, composed per-

haps of the dust of their ancient warriors, an Aztec or Toltec Pére-le-Chaise, or rather a roofless Westminster Abbey. So few of the ancient *teocallis* now remain, and these being nearly the only traces now existing of that extraordinary race, we regretted the more not being able to devote some time to their examination. Fanaticism and policy induced the Spanish conquerors to destroy these heathen temples, and when we recollect that at the time of the reformation in civilized England, the most splendid Catholic edifices were made level with the ground, in compliance with the ferocious edict of John Knox, "Ding down the nests, and the rooks will fly off;" we can have little wonder or blame to bestow upon Cortes, who, in the excitement of a siege, gave orders for the destruction of these blood-stained sanctuaries. In the afternoon, we arrived at San Juan, a pretty village, boasting of an inn, a school-house, an avenue of fine trees, and a stream of clear water. It is true that the inn is a Mexican posada, bearing as much resemblance to what is generally called an inn, as an hacienda does to an English country-house; the school-house, a room with a mud floor and a few dirty benches, occupied by little ragged boys and girls; but the avenue is pretty, the grass as green as emeralds, and the water crystal. We walked out while they changed horses, of which Señor —— had fresh relays of his own prepared all along the road; and entered the school-house, attracted by the noise and the invitingly open door. The master was a poor, ragged, pale, care-worn looking young man, seemingly half-dinned with the noise, but very earnest in his

work. The children, all speaking at once, were learning to spell out of some old bills of Congress. Several moral sentences were written on the wall in very independent orthography. C——n having remarked to the master that they were ill-spelt, he seemed very much astonished, and even inclined to doubt the fact. I thought it was one of those cases where ignorance is bliss, and fear the observation may have cost the young man a night's rest.

A row of grinning skulls was ranged round the wall of the church-yard, and the sexton, who gave us admittance to the church, taking up one to shew it off, it all crumbled into dust, which filled the air like a cloud.

At the posada they gave us rancid sheep's milk, cheese, and biscuits so hard that C——n asked the host if they were made in the same year with the church, at which he seemed mightily pleased, and could not stop laughing till we got into the carriage.

Soon after leaving San Juan, we were met by the Señora de ——, in an open carriage, coming with her children to meet us, and though she had travelled since sunrise from her hacienda, she appeared as if freshly dressed for an evening party; her dress, amber-colored crape, trimmed with white blonde, short sleeves and *décoltée;* a set of beautiful Neapolitan strawberry-coral, set in gold, straw-colored satin shoes, and a little China crape shawl, embroidered in bright flowers; her hair dressed and uncovered.

We stopped at their hacienda of Sopayuca, an old house, standing solitarily in the midst of great fields of maguey. It has a small deserted garden adjoining,

amongst whose tangled bushes a pretty little tame deer was playing, with its half-startled look, and full wild eye. We found an excellent breakfast prepared, and here, for the first time, I conceived the possibility of not disliking *pulque*. We visited the large buildings where it is kept, and found it rather refreshing, with a sweet taste and a creamy froth upon it; and with a much less decided odor than that which is sold in Mexico.

This hacienda is under the charge of an administrador, to whom —— pays a large annual sum, and whose place is by no means a sinecure, as he lives in perpetual danger from robbers. He is captain of a troop of soldiers, and as his life has been spent in "persecuting robbers," he is an object of intense hatred to that free and independent body, and has some thoughts of removing to another part of the country, where he may be more tranquil. He gave us a terrible account of these night attacks, of the ineffectual protection afforded him by the government, and of the nearly insuperable difficulties thrown in the way of any attempt to bring these men to justice. He lately told the President that he had some thoughts of joining the robbers himself, as they were the only persons in the Republic protected by the government. The President, however, is not to blame in this matter. He has used every endeavor to check these abuses; and difficulties have been thrown in his way from very unexpected sources. . . .

Apropos to which, the —— Consul told us the other day, that some time ago, having occasion to consult Judge —— upon an affair of importance, he

was shown into an apartment where that functionary was engaged in conversation with some suspicious-looking individuals, or rather who were above suspicion, their appearance plainly indicating their calling. On the table before him lay a number of guns, swords, pistols, and all sorts of arms. The Judge requested Monsieur de —— to be seated, observing that he was investigating a case of robbery committed by these persons. The robbers were seated, smoking very much at their ease, and the Judge was enjoying the same innocent recreation; when his cigar becoming extinguished, one of these gentlemen taking his from his mouth, handed it to the magistrate, who relighted his *puro* (cigar) at it, and returned it with a polite bow. In short, they were completely *hand in glove.*

In the evening we reached Santiago, where we now are, about eighteen leagues from Mexico, a large house, in a wild-looking country, standing in solitary state, with hills behind, and rocks before it, and surrounded by great uncultivated plains and pasture-fields. Everything is *en grand* in this domain. There is a handsome chapel and sacristy; a plaza de toros; hundreds of horses and mules; and between *dependientes* and hangers-on, we sat down, thirty or forty people, to dinner.

7th. — The very day of our arrival, Bernardo the Matador, with his men, arrived from Mexico, bringing their superb dresses with them, for the purpose of giving us a country bull fight. As an hacienda of this kind is an immense empty house, without furniture or books, all the amusement is to be found

either out of doors, or in large parties in the house; and the unostentatious hospitality which exists in this and some other of the old families, is a pleasing remnant of Spanish manners and habits, now falling into disuse, and succeeded by more pretension to refinement, and less of either real wealth or sociability.

In the evening here, all assemble in a large hall; the Señora de —— playing the piano; while the whole party, agents, dependientes, major-domo, coachmen, matadors, picadors and women-servants, assemble, and perform the dances of the country; *jarabes, aforrados, enanos, palomos, zapateros*, &c., &c. It must not be supposed, that in this apparent mingling of ranks between masters and servants, there is the slightest want of respect on the part of the latter; on the contrary, they seem to exert themselves, as in duty bound, for the amusement of their master and his guests. There is nothing republican in it; no feeling of equality; as far as I have seen, that feeling does not exist here, except between people of the same rank. It is more like some remains of the feudal system, where the retainers sat at the same table with their chief, but below the salt. The dances are monotonous, with small steps and a great deal of shuffling, but the music is rather pretty, and some of the dancers were very graceful and agile; and if it were not invidious to make distinctions, we *might* particularize Bernardo the Matador, the head coachman, and a handsome peasant girl, with a short scarlet and yellow petticoat, and a foot and ankle *à la Vestris*. They were all very quiet, but seemed in a state of

intense enjoyment; and some of the men accompanied the dancers on the guitar.

First the player strikes up in quick time, and the dancer performs a quick movement; then the musician accompanies the music with his voice, and the dancer goes through some slow steps. Such is the case in the *Aforrado* or *Lining*, a curious *nom de tendresse*, expressive, I suppose, of something soft and well wadded. The words are as follows:

1.

Aforrado de mi vida!
Como estás, como te va?
Como has pasado la noche,
No has tenido novedad?

2.

Aforrado de mi vida!
Yo te quisiera cantar,
Pero mis ojos son tiernos,
Y empazaran á llorar.

3.

De Guadalajara vengo,
Lideando con un soldado,
Solo por venir a ver
A mi jarabe aforrado.

4.

Y vente con migo
Y yo te daré
Zapatos de raso
Color de café.

Of these poetical sublimities, a translation at once literal and metrical, would we think, damp the spirit of a Coleridge.

1.

Lining of my life!
  How are you? how do you do?
How have you passed the night?
  Have you met with nothing new?

2.

Lining of my life!
  To you I should like to sing;
But that my eyes are weak,
  And tears might begin to spring.

3.

From Guadalajara fighting,
  With a soldier I came on,
My well-lined *sweet-syrup!*
  I came to see you alone.

4.

And come then with me,
  And I will give thee
Such fine shoes of satin,
  The color of *tea*.

It is *coffee*, but you will excuse the poetical license. The music married to this "immortal verse," I have learned by ear, and shall send you. In the "*enanos*" (the dwarfs) the dancer *makes himself little*, every time the chorus is sung.

1.

Ah! que bonitos
  Son los enanos
Los chiquititos
  Y Mejicanos.

2.

Sale la linda,
Sale la fea,
Sale el enano
Con su zalea.

3.

Los enanitos
Se enojaron
Porque á las enanas
Les pellizcaron.

There are many more verses, but I think you will find these quite satisfactory. "Ah! how pretty are the dwarfs, the little ones, the Mexicans! Out comes the pretty one, out comes the ugly one, out comes the dwarf, with his jacket of skin. The little he-dwarfs were angry, because some one pinched the she-dwarfs." There is another called the *Toro*, of which the words are not very interesting; and the *Zapatero*, or shoemaker was very well danced by a gentleman who accompanied himself, at the same time, on the guitar.

Yesterday morning, we set off in a burning sun, over a perfect Egyptian desert, to visit the famous arches of Cempoala, a magnificent work, which we were told had greatly excited the admiration of Mr. Poinsett when in this country. This aqueduct, the object of whose construction was to supply these arid plains with water, was the work of a Spanish Franciscan friar, and has never been entirely concluded. We travelled about six leagues, and sate there for hours, looking up at the great stone arches, which seem like a work of giants.

In the afternoon, we all rode to the Plaza de Toros. The evening was cool, our horses good, the road pretty and shady, and the plaza itself a most picturesque enclosure, surrounded by lofty trees. Chairs were placed for us on a raised platform; and the bright green of the trees, the flashing dresses of the *toreadors*, the roaring of the fierce bulls, the spirited horses, the music and the cries; the Indians shouting from the trees up which they had climbed; all formed a scene of savage grandeur, which for a short time at least is interesting. Bernardo was dressed in blue satin and gold; the picadors in black and silver; the others in maroon-colored satin and gold. All those on foot wear knee-breeches and white silk stockings, a little black cap with ribbons, and a plait of hair streaming down behind. The horses were generally good, and as each new adversary appeared, seemed to participate in the enthusiasm of their riders. One bull after another was driven in roaring, and as here they are generally fierce, and their horns not blunted as in Mexico, it is a much more dangerous affair. The bulls were not killed, but were sufficiently tormented. One stuck full of arrows and fireworks, all adorned with ribbons and colored paper, made a sudden spring over an immensely high wall, and dashed into the woods. I thought afterwards of this unfortunate animal, how it must have been wandering alone all night, bellowing with pain, the concealed arrows piercing its flesh, and looking like gay ornaments;

"So, when the watchful shepherd, from the blind,
Wounds with a random shaft the careless hind,

Distracted with her pain she flies the woods,
Bounds o'er the lawn, and seeks the silent floods —
With fruitless care ; for still the fatal dart
Sticks in her side, and rankles in her heart."

If the arrows had stuck too deep, and that the bull could not rub them off against the trees, he must have bled to death. Had he remained, his fate would have been better, for when the animal is entirely exhausted they throw him down with a laso, and pulling out the arrows, put ointment on the wounds.

The skill of the men is surprising ; but the most curious part of the exhibition was when a coachman of ——s, a strong, handsome Mexican, mounted on the back of a fierce bull, which plunged and flung himself about as if possessed by a legion of demons, and forced the animal to gallop round and round the arena. The bull is first caught by the laso, and thrown on his side, struggling furiously. The man mounts while he is still on the ground. At the same moment the laso is withdrawn, and the bull starts up, maddened by feeling the weight of his unusual burden. The rider must dismount in the same way, the bull being first thrown down, otherwise he would be gored in a moment. It is terribly dangerous, for if the man were to lose his seat, his death is nearly certain ; but these Mexicans are superb riders. A monk, who is attached to the establishment, seems an ardent admirer of these sports, and his presence is useful, in case of a dangerous accident occurring, which is not unfrequent.

The amusement was suddenly interrupted by sudden darkness, and a tremendous storm of rain and

thunder, in the midst of which we mounted our horses, and galloped home.

TULANSINGO ——, Sth.

Another bull-fight last evening! It is like pulque; one makes wry faces at it at first, and then begins to like it. One thing we soon discovered; which was that the bulls, if so inclined, could leap upon our platform, as they occasionally sprang over a wall twice as high. There was a part of the spectacle rather too horrible. The horse of one of the picadors was gored, his side torn up by the bull's horns, and in this state, streaming with blood, he was forced to gallop round the circle. . . . .

We spent one day in visiting Omatusco, an hacienda belonging to the Señora T——a, situated in the plains of Apan, and famous for the superior excellence of its pulque. The organos, the nopal, and great fields of maguey, constitute the chief vegetation for many miles round. The hacienda itself, a fine large building, stands lonely and bleak in the midst of magueys. A fine chapel, left unfinished since her husband's death, attracted our attention, by its simple architecture and unpretending elegance. It is nearly impossible to conceive anything more lonely than a residence here must be; or in fact in any of the haciendas situated on these great plains of Otumba and Apan.

This morning we set off for Tulansingo, in four carriages and six, containing the whole family, ourselves, maids, and children, padre and nursery governess; relays being placed all along the road, which we traversed at full gallop. But in crossing some

great pasture-fields, the drivers of two of the carriages began to race; one of the horses fell and threw the postilion; the carriage itself was overturned, and though none of the inmates were injured, the poor *mozo* was terribly wounded in his head and legs. No assistance being near, he changed places with one of the men on horseback, and was brought on slowly.

About three in the afternoon, we arrived at Tulansingo, rather an important little city in its way, and which has been the theatre of many revolutionary events; with various streets and shops, a handsome church; alcaldes, a prefect, &c. There appear to be some few good houses and decent families, and clean, small shops, and there are pretty, shady walks in the environs; and though there are also plenty of miserable dwellings and dirty people, it is altogether rather a civilized place. The house of ——, which stands within a court-yard, and is *the* house *par excellence* is very handsome, with little furniture, but with some remnants of luxury. The dining-hall is a noble room, with beautiful Chinese paper, opening into a garden, which is the boast of the Republic, and is indeed singularly pretty, and kept in beautiful order, with gravel walks and fine trees, clear tanks and sparkling fountains, and an extraordinary profusion of the most beautiful flowers, roses especially. There is something extremely oriental in its appearance, and the fountains are ornamented with China vases and Chinese figures of great value. Walking along under arches formed by rose bushes, a small column of water spouted forth from each bush, sprinkling us all over with its shower. But the prettiest thing in the

garden is a great tank of clear water, inclosed on three sides by a Chinese building, round which runs a piazza with stone pillars, shaded by a drapery of white curtains. Comfortable, well-cushioned sofas are ranged along the piazza, which opens into a large room, where one may dress after bathing. It is the prettiest and coolest retreat possible, and entirely surrounded by trees and roses. Here one may lie at noon-day, with the sun and the world completely shut out. They call this an English garden, than which it rather resembles the summer retreat of a sultan.

When we arrived, we found dinner laid for forty persons, and the table ornamented, by the taste of the gardener, with pyramids of beautiful flowers.

I have now formed acquaintance with many Mexican dishes; *molé,* (meat stewed in red chile), boiled nopal, fried bananas, green chile, &c. Then we invariably have *frijoles,* (brown beans stewed,) hot tortillas — and this being in the country, pulque is the universal beverage. In Mexico, tortillas and pulque are considered unfashionable, though both are still to be met with occasionally, in some of the best old houses. They have here a most delicious species of cream cheese, made by the Indians, and ate with virgin honey. I believe there is an intermixture of goats' milk in it; but the Indian families who make it, and who have been offered large sums for the receipt, find it more profitable to keep their secret.

Every dinner has *puchero* immediately following the soup; consisting of boiled mutton, beef, bacon, fowls, garbanzos (a white bean), small gourds, pota-

toes, boiled pears, greens, and any other vegetables; a piece of each put on your plate at the same time, and accompanied by a sauce of herbs or tomatoes.

As for fruits, we have mameys, chirimoyas, granaditas, white and black zapotes; the black, sweet, with a green skin and a black pulp, and with black stones in it; the white resembling it in outward appearance and form, but with a white pulp, and the kernel, which is said to be poisonous, is very large, round and white. It belongs to a larger and more leafy tree than the black zapote, and grows in cold or temperate climates; whereas the other is a native of tierra caliente. Then there is the chicozapote, of the same family, with a whitish skin and a white or rose-tinged pulp; this also belongs to the warm regions. The capulin, or Mexican cherry; the mango, of which the best come from Orizaba and Cordova; the cayote, &c. Of these I prefer the chirimoya, zapote blanco, granadita and mango; but this is a matter of taste.

12*th*. — We have spent some days here very pleasantly; riding amongst the hills in the neighborhood, exploring caves, viewing waterfalls, and climbing on foot or on horseback, wherever foot or horse could penetrate. No habits to be worn in these parts, as I found from experience, after being caught upon a gigantic maguey, and my gown torn in two. It is certainly always the wisest plan to adopt the customs of the country one lives in. A dress either of stuff, such as merino, or of muslin, as short as it is usually worn, a reboso tied over one shoulder, and a large straw hat, is about the most convenient costume that

can be adopted. The horses are small, but strong, spirited and well made; generally unshod, which they say makes the motion more agreeable; and almost all, at least all ladies' horses, are taught the *paso*, which I find tiresome for a continuance, though a good paso-horse will keep up with others that gallop, and for a longer time.

The great amusement here in the evening is playing at *juegos de prendas*, games with forfeits, which I recommend to all who wish to make a rapid improvement in the Spanish tongue. Last night, being desired to name a forfeit for the padre, I condemned him to dance the *jarabe*, of which he performed a few steps in his long gown and girdle, with equal awkwardness and good-nature. We met to-day the prettiest little ranchera, a farmer's wife or daughter, riding in front of a *mozo* on the same horse, their usual mode, dressed in a short embroidered muslin petticoat, white satin shoes, a pearl necklace and earrings, a reboso, and a large round straw hat. The ladies sit their horse on a contrary side to our fashion. They have generally adopted English saddles, but the farmers' wives frequently sit in a sort of chair, which they find much more commodious.

Some country ladies, who attended mass in the chapel this morning, were dressed in very short clear white muslin gowns, very much starched, and so disposed as to show two under petticoats, also stiffly starched, and trimmed with lace; their shoes colored satin. Considered as a costume of their own, I begin to think it rather pretty. The oldest women here or in Mexico, never wear caps; nothing but

their own gray hair, sometimes cut short, sometimes turned up with a comb, and not unusually tied behind in a pig-tail. There is no attempt to conceal the ravages of time. . . .

It appears to me, that amongst the young girls here there is not that desire to enter upon the cares of matrimony, which is to be observed in many other countries. The opprobrious epithet of old maid is unknown. A girl is not the less admired because she has been ten or a dozen years in society; the most severe remark made on her is that she is hard to please. No one calls her *passée*, or looks out for a newer face to admire. I have seen no courting of the young men either in mothers or daughters; no match-making mammas, or daughters looking out for their own interests. In fact, young people have so few opportunities of being together, that Mexican marriages must be made in Heaven, for I see no opportunity of bringing them about upon earth. The young men when they do meet with young ladies in society, appear devoted to and very much afraid of them. I know but one lady in Mexico who has the reputation of having manœuvred all her daughters into great marriages; but she is so clever, and her daughters were such beauties, that it can have cost her no trouble. As for flirtation, the name is unknown, and the thing.

I have been taking lessons in the Indian dances from Doña R——a; they are not ungraceful, but lazy and monotonous. . . .

On every door in this house, there is a printed paper to the following effect;—

" Quien à esta casa da luz? Jesus.
" Quien la llena de alegria? Maria.
" Y quien la abraza en la fé? José.
" Luego bien claro se vé
" Que siempre habrá contricion,
" Teniendo en la corazon,
" A Jesus, Maria y José.

" Who gives light to this house? Jesus.
" Who fills it with joy? Mary.
" Who kindles faith in it? Joseph.
" Then we see very clearly
" That there will always be contrition,
" Keeping in our hearts,
" Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

These are written in verse, and below: "The most Illustrious Bishop of Monte-Rey, Don Fray José de Jesus Maria Balaunzaran, hereby ordains and grants, along with the Bishops of Puebla, Durango, Valledolid and Guadalajara, two hundred days of Indulgence to all those who devoutly repeat the above ejaculation, and invoke the sweet names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph." . . . The people here have certainly a poetical vein in their composition. Everything is put into verse — sometimes doggerel, like the above, (in which *luz* rhyming with *Jesus* shows that the *z* is pronounced here like an *s*) occasionally a little better, but always in rhyme.

We went this evening to visit the Countess del ——, who has a house in the village. Found her in bed, feverish, and making use of simple remedies,

such as herbs, the knowledge and use of which have descended from the ancient Indians to the present lords of the soil. The Spanish historians who have written upon the conquest of Mexico, all mention the knowledge which the Mexican physicians had of herbs. It was supposed by these last, that for every infirmity there was a remedy in the herbs of the field; and to apply them according to the nature of the malady, was the chief science of these primitive professors of medicine. Much which is now used in European pharmacy is due to the research of Mexican doctors; such as sarsaparilla, jalep, friar's rhubarb, *mechoacan*, &c.; also various emetics, antidotes to poison, remedies against fever, and an infinite number of plants, minerals, gums and simple medicines. As for their infusions, decoctions, ointments, plasters, oils, &c., Cortes himself mentions the wonderful number of these which he saw in the Mexican market for sale. From certain trees they distilled balsams; and drew a balsamic liquid both from a decoction of the branches, and from the bark steeped in water. Bleeding and bathing were their other favorite remedies. The country people breathed a vein with a maguey-point, and when they could not find leeches, substituted the prickles of the American hedgehog.

Besides bathing in the rivers, lakes, tanks and fountains, they used a bath which is still to be seen in many Indian villages, and which they call the temezcalli. It is made of unbaked bricks; its form is that of a baker's oven, about eight feet wide and six high; the pavement rather convex, and lower than the sur-

face of the soil. A person can enter this bath only on his knees. Opposite the entry is a stone or brick stove, its opening towards the exterior of the bath, with a hole to let out the smoke. Before the bath is prepared, the floor inside is covered with a mat, on which is placed a jar of water, some herbs and leaves of corn. The stove is then heated, until the stones which unite it with the bath, become red hot. When the bather enters, the entry is closed, and the only opening left, is a hole at the top of the vault, which, when the smoke of the oven has passed through, is also shut. They then pour water upon the red hot stones, from which a thick vapor arises, which fills the temezcalli. The bather then throws himself on the mat, and drawing down the steam with the herbs and maize, wets them in the tepid water of the jar, and if he has any pain, applies them to the part affected. This having produced perspiration, the door is opened and the well-baked patient comes out and dresses. For fevers, for bad colds, for the bite of a poisonous animal, this is said to be a certain cure; also for acute rheumatism.

For the cure of wounds, the Spaniards found the Mexican remedies most efficacious. Cortes himself was cured by one of their doctors of a severe wound in the head, received at Otumba, through which we lately passed. For fractures, for humors, for everything they had their remedy; sometimes pulverizing the seeds of plants, and attributing much of their efficacy to the superstitious ceremonies and prayers which they used while applying them, especially those which they offered up to *Tzapotlatenan*, the goddess of medicine.

A great deal of this knowledge is still preserved amongst their descendants, and considered efficacious. For every illness there is an herb, for every accident a remedy. Baths are in constant use, although these temezcallis are confined to the Indians. In every family there is some knowledge of simple medicine, very necessary in *haciendas* especially, where no physician can possibly be procured. . . . .

There is a hill upon ——'s property, said to contain much buried treasure. There are many traditions here of this concealed Indian wealth, but very little gold has been actually recovered from these mountain-tombs. Buried gold has occasionally come to light; not by researches in the mountains, for few are rash enough to throw away their money in search of what would probably prove an imaginary treasure; but by accident — in the ruins of old houses, where their proprietors had deposited them for safety in some period of revolution; perhaps no later than at the time of the Spanish expulsion.

Some years ago, an old and very poor woman, rented a house in the environs of Mexico, as old and wretched as herself, for four reals a week. It had an old broken up stone *patio*, (inner court-yard) which she used occasionally to sweep with a little old broom. One day she observed two or three stones in this patio, larger and more carefully put together than the others, and the little old woman being a daughter of Eve by some collateral branch, poked down and worked at the stones, until she was able to raise them up; when lo! and behold, she discovered a can full of treasure; no less than five

thousand dollars in gold! Her delight and her fright were unbounded; and being a prudent old lady, she determined in the first place to leave the house, and next, to bring in her treasure *poquito á poquito*, (little by little,) to a room in Mexico, keeping the old house as a sort of bank. She did so; took a nice room, and instead of sleeping on a *petate*, (mat) as she had hitherto done, bought herself a little bedstead, and even a mattress; treated herself not only to chocolate, but to a few bottles of good wine! Such extraordinary luxury could not fail to excite suspicion. She was questioned by her neighbors, and at length entrusted her secret to their keeping. History says, that notwithstanding this, she was not robbed, and was allowed to enjoy her good fortune in peace. It is difficult to credit such a miracle in this land of picking and stealing, but my authority is beyond impeachment.

. . . Whilst I write on these irrelevant matters, I am warned that the coaches are at the door, and that we are about setting off for Tepenacasco, another hacienda of Señor ——'s, a few leagues from this.

LETTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

Arrival at Tepenacasco — Lake with wild duck — Ruined hacienda — Sunset on the plains — Troop of asses — Ride by moonlight — Leave Tepenacasco — San Miguel — Description — Thunder storm — Guasco — Journey to Real del Monte — English road — Scenery — Village of Real — Count de Regla — Director's house — English breakfast — Visit to the Mines — Mining speculations — Grand scenery — Visit to Regla — The Cascade — The Storm — Loneliness — A journey in storm and darkness — Return to Tepenacasco — Journey to Sopayuca — Narrow escape — Famous Bull — Return to Mexico.

TEPENACASCO.

THIS is a fine wild scene. The house stands entirely alone; not a tree near it. Great mountains rise behind it, and in every other direction, as far as the eye can reach, are vast plains, over which the wind comes whistling fresh and free, with nothing to impede its triumphant progress. In front of the house is a clear sheet of water, a great deep square basin for collecting the rain. These *jagueys*, as they are called, are very common in Mexico, where there are few rivers, and where the use of machines for raising water, is by no means general as yet. There is no garden here, but there are a few shrubs and flowers in the inner court-yard. The house inside is handsome, with a chapel, and a patio, which is occasion-

ally used as a plaza de toros. The rooms are well fitted up, and the bedroom walls are covered with a pretty French paper, representing scenes of Swiss rural life. There are great outhouses, stables for the mules and horses, and stone barns for the wheat and barley, which, together with pulque, form the produce of this hacienda.

We took a long ride this morning to visit a fine lake, where there are plenty of wild duck and turtle. The gentlemen took their guns, and had tolerable sport. The lake is very deep, so that boats have sailed on it, and several miles in circumference, with a rivulet flowing from it. Yet with all this water, the surrounding land, not more than twenty feet higher, is dry and sterile, and the lake is turned to no account; either from want of means or of hydraulic knowledge. However, C——n having made some observation on this subject, the proprietor of the lake and of a ruined house standing near, which is the very picture of loneliness and desolation, remarked in reply; that from this estate to Mexico, the distance is thirty-six leagues; that a load of wheat costs one real a league, and moreover the *alcaba*, the duty which has to be paid at the gates of Mexico, so that it would bring no profit if sent there; while in the surrounding district there is not sufficient population to consume the produce; so that these unnecessary and burthensome taxes, the thinness of the population and the want of proper means of transport, impede the prosperity of the people, and check the progress of agriculture. . . . .

I had a beautiful horse, but half broke, and which

took fright and ran off with me. I got great credit for keeping my seat so well, which I must confess was more through good fortune than skill. The day was delightful, the air exhilarating, and the blue sky perfectly cloudless as we galloped over the plains; but at length the wind rose so high that we dismounted, and got into the carriage. We sat by the shores of the lake, and walked along its pebbly margin, watching the wild duck as they skimmed over its glassy surface; and returned home in a magnificent sunset; the glorious god himself a blood-red globe, surrounded by blazing clouds of gold and crimson.

In the evening, a troop of asses were driven across the plain, and led round to the back of the house; and we were all called out in haste, and each desired to choose one of the long-eared fraternity for our particular use. Some had saddles, and some had none, but we mounted to the number of thirty persons, followed by a cavalcade of little ragged boys armed with sticks and whips. My ass was an obstinate brute, whom I had mistakenly chosen, for his sleek coat and open countenance, but by dint of being lashed up, he suddenly set off at full gallop, and distanced all the others. Such screaming, and laughing and confusion! and so much difficulty in keeping the party together! It was nearly dark when we set off; but the moon rose, her silver disk lighting up the hills and the plains; the wind fell, and the night was calm and delightful. We rode about six miles, to a pretty little chapel with a cross, that gleamed amongst the trees in the moonlight, by

the side of a running stream. Here we dismounted, and sat by the brink of the little sparkling rivulet, while the deep shadows came stealing over the mountains, and all aroundwas still, and cool and silent; all but the merry laughter of our noisy cavalcade. We returned about eleven o'clock, few accidents having occurred. Doña R——a had fallen once. Doña M—— had crushed her foot against her neighbor's ass. The padre was shaken to a jelly, and a learned senator, who was of the party, declared he would never recover from that night's jolting. To-morrow we shall set off for Real del Monte.

17*th.* — After mass in the chapel, we left Tepenacasco about seven o'clock; and travelled (I believe by a short cut) over rocks and walls, torrents and fields of maguey, all in a heavy carriage with six horses. Arriving in sight of walls, the mozos gallop on and tear them down. Over the mountain-torrents or *barrancas*, they dash boldly, encouraging the horses by the wildest shrieks.

We stopped at San Miguel, a country house belonging to the Count de Regla, the former proprietor of the mines which we were about to visit; the most picturesque and lovely place imaginable, but entirely abandoned; the house comfortless and out of repair. We wandered through paths cut in the beautiful woods, and by the side of a rivulet that seems to fertilize everything through which it winds. We climbed the hills, and made our way through the tangled luxuriance of trees and flowers; and in the midst of hundreds of gaudy blossoms, I neglected

them all upon coming to a grassy slope covered with daisies and buttercups. We even found some hawthorn bushes. It might be English scenery, were it not that there is a richness in the vegetation unknown in England. But all these beautiful solitudes are abandoned to the deer that wander fearlessly amongst the woods, and the birds that sing in their branches. While we were still far from the house, a thunderstorm came on. When it rains here, the windows of heaven seem opened, and the clouds pour down water in floods; the lightning also appears to me peculiarly vivid, and many more accidents occur from it here than in the north. We were drenched in five minutes, and in this plight resumed our seats in the carriage, and set off for *Guasco* (a village where we were to pass the night) in the midst of the pelting storm. In an hour or two the horses were wading up to their knees in water, and we arrived at the pretty village of Guasco, in a most comfortless condition. There are no inns in these parts, but we were hospitably received by a widow lady, a friend of ——'s.

The Señora de ——, in clear muslin and lace, with satin shoes, was worse off than I in mousseline de laine and brodequins; nevertheless, I mean to adopt the fashion of the country tomorrow, when we are to rise at four, to go on to Real del Monte; and try the effect of travelling with clear gown, satin petticoat and shoes ditto; because, "when one is in Rome," &c. The storm continues with such unabated violence, that we must content ourselves with contemplating the watery landscape from the windows.

TEPENACASCO.

Rose in Guasco at four o'clock, dressed by candle light, took chocolate, and set off for Real del Monte. After we had travelled a few leagues, tolerably cold, we rejoiced when the sun rose, and dispelling the mist, threw his cheerful light over mountain and wood. The trees looked green and refreshed, after their last night's bath; the very rocks were sparkling with silver. The morning was perfectly brilliant, and every leaf and flower was glittering with the rain-drops not yet dried. The carriage ascended slowly the road cut through the mountains by the English company; a fine and useful enterprise; the first broad and smooth road I have seen as yet in the Republic. Until it was made, hundreds of mules daily conveyed the ore from the mines, over a dangerous mountain path to the hacienda of Regla, a distance of six or seven leagues. We overtook wagons conveying timber to the mines of Real, nine thousand feet above the level of the sea.

The scenery was magnificent. On one side, mountains covered with oak and pine, and carpeted by the brightest-colored flowers; goats climbing up the perpendicular rocks, and looking down upon us from their vantage-ground; fresh clear rivulets, flinging themselves from rock to rock, and here and there little Indian huts perched amongst the cliffs; on the other, the deep valley with its bending forests and gushing river; while far above, we caught a glimpse of Real itself, with its sloping roofs and large church,

standing in the very midst of forests and mountains. We began to see people with fair hair and blue eyes; and one individual, with a shock of fiery red hair and an undeniable Scotch twang, I felt the greatest inclination to claim as a countryman. The Indians here looked cleaner than those in or near Mexico, and were not more than half naked. The whole country here, as well as the mines, formerly belonged to the Count de Regla, who was so wealthy, that when his son, the present Count, was christened, the whole party walked from his house to the church, upon ingots of silver. The Countess having quarrelled with the Vice-Queen, sent her, in token of reconciliation, a white satin slipper, entirely covered with large diamonds. The Count invited the King of Spain to visit his Mexican territories, assuring him that the hoofs of his Majesty's horse should touch nothing but solid silver from Vera Cruz to the capital. This might be a bravado; but a more certain proof of his wealth exists in the fact, that he caused two ships of the line, of the largest size, to be constructed in Havana at his expense, made of mahogany and cedar, and presented them to the King. The present Count was, as I already told you, married to the beautiful daughter of the *Güera Rodriguez.*

We arrived at Real del Monte about nine o'clock, and drove to the Director's house, which is extremely pretty, commanding a most beautiful and extensive view, and where we found a large fire burning in the grate; — very agreeable, as the morning was still somewhat chill, and which had a look of home and comfort that made it still more acceptable. We

were received with the greatest cordiality by the Director Mr. Rule, and his lady, and invited to partake of the most delicious breakfast that I have seen for a long while; a happy *mélange* of English and Mexican. The snow-white table-cloth, smoking tea-urn, hot rolls, fresh eggs, coffee, tea and toast looked very much à l'Anglaise, while there were numbers of substantial dishes à l'Espagnole, and delicious fresh cream cheeses, to all which, our party did ample justice.

After breakfast, we went out to visit the mines, and it was curious to see English children, clean and pretty, with their white hair and rosy cheeks, and neat straw bonnets, mingled with the little copper-colored Indians. We visited all the different works; the apparatus for sawing, the turning-lathe, foundery, &c.; but I regretted to find that we could not descend into the mines. We went to the mouth of the shaft called the Dolores, which has a narrow opening, and is entered by perpendicular ladders. The men go down with conical caps on their heads, in which is stuck a lighted tallow candle. In the great shaft, called Terreros, they descend, by means of these ladders, to the depth of a thousand feet, there being platforms at certain distances, on which they can rest. We were obliged to content ourselves with seeing them go down, and with viewing and admiring all the great works which English energy has established here; the various steam-engines, the buildings for the separation and washing of the ore; the great stores, work-shops, offices, &c. Nearly all the workmen are British, and of these, the Scotch are preferred. Most of the miners are Indians, who work in companies,

and receive in payment the eighth part of the proceeds. The Director gave us some specimens of silver from the great heaps where they lie, sparkling like genii's treasure.

Although I have not descended into these mines, I might give you a description of them by what I have heard, and fill my paper with arithmetical figures, by which you might judge of the former and the present produce. I might tell you how Don Lucas Alaman went to England, and raised, as if by magic, the enthusiasm of the English; how one fortune after another has been swallowed up in the dark, deep gulf of speculation; how expectations have been disappointed; and how the great cause of this is the scarcity of quicksilver, which has been paid at the rate of one hundred and fifty dollars *per quintal* in real cash, when the same quantity was given at credit by the Spanish government for fifty dollars; how heaps of silver lie abandoned, because the expense of acquiring quicksilver renders it wholly unprofitable to extract it; and I might repeat the opinion of those persons by whom I have heard the subject discussed; who express their astonishment that such being the case, an arrangement is not made with the country which is the almost exclusive possessor of the quicksilver mines, by which it might be procured at a lower rate, and this great source of wealth not thrown away. But for all these matters I refer you to *Humboldt* and *Ward*, by whom they are scientifically treated, and will not trouble you with superficial remarks on so important a subject. In fact I must confess that my attention was frequently

attracted from the mines and the engines and the works of man, and the discussions arising therefrom, to the stupendous natural scenery by which we were surrounded; the unexplored forests that clothe the mountains to their very summits, the torrents that leapt and sparkled in the sunshine, the deep ravines, the many-tinted foliage, the bold and jutting rocks. All combines to increase our admiration of the bounties of nature to this favored land, to which she has given "every herb bearing seed, and every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food," while her veins are rich with precious metals; the useful and the beautiful offered with unsparing hand.

We were obliged to leave Real about two o'clock, having a long journey to perform before night, as we had the intention of returning to sleep at Tepenacasco. We took leave of our hospitable entertainers, and again resumed our journey over these fine roads, many parts of which are blasted from the great rocks of porphyry; and as we looked back at the picturesque colony glistening in the sun, could hardly believe the prophecies of our more experienced drivers, that a storm was brewing in the sky, which would burst forth before evening. We were determined not to believe it, as it was impossible to pass by the famous hacienda and ravine of Regla without paying them at least a short visit.

This stupendous work of the Mexican miners in former days, is some leagues to the south of Real del Monte, and is said to have cost many millions of dollars. One should view it as we did, in a thunderstorm, for it has an air of vastness and desolation,

and at the same time of grandeur, that shows well amidst a war of the elements. Down in a steep barranca, encircled by basaltic cliffs, it lies; a mighty pile of building, which seems as if it might have been constructed by some philosophical giant or necromancer; — so that one is not prepared to find there an English director and his wife, and the unpoetic comforts of roast mutton and potatoes!

All is on a gigantic scale; the immense vaulted store-houses for the silver ore, the great smelting-furnaces and covered buildings where we saw the process of amalgamation going on; the water-wheels, in short, all the necessary machinery for the smelting and amalgamation of the metal. We walked to see the great cascade, with its rows of basaltic columns, and found a seat on a piece of broken pillar beside the rushing river, where we had a fine view of the lofty cliffs, covered with the wildest and most luxuriant vegetation; vines trailing themselves over every broken shaft; moss creeping over the huge disjointed masses of rock, and trees overhanging the precipitous ravine. The columns look as if they might have been the work of those who, on the plains of Shinar, began to build the city, and the tower whose top was to reach to heaven.

But, as we sat here, the sky suddenly became overcast; great black masses of cloud collected over our heads, and the rumbling of thunder in the distance gave notice of an approaching storm. We had scarcely time to get under shelter of the director's roof, when the thunder began to echo loudly amongst the rocks, and was speedily followed by

torrents of rain. It was a superb storm. The lightning flashed amongst the trees, the wind howled furiously, while

> "Far along
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
> *Leapt* the live thunder."

After resting and dining amidst a running accompaniment of splashing rain, roaring wind, and deep-toned thunder, we found that it was in vain to wait for a favorable change in the weather; and certainly with less experienced drivers, it would have been anything but safe to have set off amidst the darkness of the storm, down precipitous descents and over torrents swelled by the rain. The Count de Regla, who, attracted by the plentiful supply of water in this ravine, conceived the idea of employing part of his enormous fortune in the construction of these colossal works, must have had an imagination on a large scale. The English directors, whose wives consent to bury themselves in such abysses, ought to feel more grateful to them than any other husbands towards their sacrificing better halves. For the men, occupied all day amongst their workmen and machinery, and returning late in the evening to dine and sleep, there is no great self-immolation; but a poor woman, living all alone, in a house fenced in by gigantic rocks, with no other sound in her ears from morning till night but the roar of thunder or the clang of machinery, had need, for her personal comfort, to have either a most romantic imagination, so that she may console herself with feeling like an en-

chanted princess in a giant's castle; or a most commonplace spirit, so that she may darn stockings to the sound of the waterfall, and feel no other inconvenience from the storm, but that her husband will require dry linen when he comes home.

As for us, we were drenched before reaching the carriage, into which the water was pouring; and when we set off, once more, amidst the rapidly-increasing darkness, and over these precipitous roads, we thought that our chance of reaching the proposed haven that night was very small. After much toil to the horses, we got out of the ravines, and found ourselves once more on the great plains, where the tired animals ploughed their way over fields and ditches and great stones, and among trees and tangled bushes; an occasional flash of lightning our only guide. Great was our joy, when, about eleven o'clock, a man, riding on in advance, shouted out, that the lights of Tepenacasco were in sight; and still more complete our satisfaction, when we drove round the tank into the court-yard of the hacienda. We were received with great applause by the inmates, and were not sorry to rest after a very fatiguing, yet agreeable day.

MEXICO, 21st.

We left Tepenacasco the day before yesterday. Our journey was very dangerous, in consequence of the great rains, which had swelled the torrents; especially as we set off late, and most of it was performed by night. In these barrancas, carriages and horsemen have been frequently swept away and dashed in pieces over the precipices. But to make our situa-

tion more disagreeable, we had scarcely set off, before a terrible storm of thunder and rain again came on, with more violence than the night preceding. It grew perfectly dark, and we listened with some alarm to the roaring torrents, over which, especially over one, not many leagues from Sopayuca, where we were to spend the night, it was extremely doubtful whether we could pass. The carriage was full of water, but we were too much alarmed to be uneasy about trifles. Amidst the howling of the wind and the pealing thunder, no one could hear the other speak. Suddenly, by a vivid flash of lightning, the dreaded barranca appeared in sight for a moment, and almost before the drivers could stop them, the horses had plunged in. It was a moment of mortal fear, such as I shall never forget. The shrieks of the drivers to encourage the horses, the loud cries of Ave Maria! the uncertainty as to whether our heavy carriage could be dragged across, the horses struggling and splashing in the boiling torrent, and the horrible fate that awaited us should one of them fall or falter! . . . . The Señora —— and I shut our eyes, and held each other's hands, and certainly no one breathed till we were safe on the other side. We were then told that we had crossed within a few feet of a precipice, over which a coach had been dashed into fifty pieces during one of these swells, and of course every one killed; and that, if instead of horses, we had travelled with mules, we must have been lost. You may imagine that we were not sorry to reach Sopayuca; where the people ran out to the door at the sound of carriage wheels, and could not

believe that we had passed the barranca that night; as two or three horsemen who had rode in that direction had turned back, and pronounced it impassable.

Lights and supper were soon procured, and by way of interlude, a monstrous bull of great fame in these parts, was led up to the supper-table for our inspection, with a rope through his nose; a fierce brute, but familiarly called "el chato," the flatnose, from the shortness of his horns. The lightning continued very vivid, and they told us that a woman had been struck there some time before, while in the chapel by night.

We rose at four o'clock the next morning, and set off for Mexico. The morning, as usual after these storms, was peculiarly fresh and beautiful; but the sun soon grew oppressive on the great plains. About two o'clock, we entered Mexico by the Guadalupe gate. We found our house *in statu quo* — agreeable letters from Europe — great preparations making for the English ball, to assist at which we have returned sooner than we otherwise should, and for which my femme-de-chambre has just completed a dress for me, very much to her own satisfaction.

LETTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

English Ball — Dresses — Diamonds — Mineria — Arrival of the Pope's Bull — Consecration of the Archbishop — Foreign Ministers — Splendor of the Cathedral — Description of the ceremony.

25th.

THE English ball at the Mineria has passed off with great eclat. Nothing could be more splendid than the general effect of this noble building, brilliantly illuminated and filled with a well-dressed crowd. The President and corps diplomatique were in full uniform, and the display of diamonds was extraordinary. We ladies of the corps diplomatique tried to flatter ourselves that we made up in elegance what we wanted in magnificence! for in jewels no foreign ladies could attempt to compete with those of the country. The daughter of Countess ——, just arrived from Paris, and whose acquaintance I made for the first time, wore pale blue, with garlands of pale pink roses, and a parure of most superb brilliants. The Señora de A——'s head reminded me of that of the Marchioness of Londonderry, in her opera-box. The Marquesa de Vivanco had a riviere of brilliants of extraordinary size and beauty, and perfectly well set. Madame S——r wore a very rich blonde dress, *garnie* with plumes of ostrich feathers,

a large diamond fastening each plume. One lady wore a diadem which —— said could not be worth less than a hundred thousand dollars. Diamonds are always worn plain or with pearls; colored stones are considered trash, which is a pity, as I think rubies and emeralds set in diamonds would give more variety and splendor to their jewels. There were a profusion of large pearls, generally of a pear shape. The finest and roundest were those worn by the Señora B——a. There were many blonde dresses, a great fashion here. I know no lady without one. Amongst the prettiest and most tastefully dressed girls, were the E——s, as usual. Many dresses were overloaded, a common fault in Mexico; and many of the dresses, though rich, were old-fashioned; but the coup d'œil was not the less brilliant, and it was somewhat astonishing, in such a multitude, not to see a single objectionable person. To be sure the company were all invited.

On entering the noble court, which was brilliantly illuminated with colored lamps hung from pillar to pillar, and passing up the great staircase, we were met at the first landing, by Mr. P—— in full uniform, and other English gentlemen, the directors of the ball, who stood there to receive the ladies. His Excellency led me up stairs to the top of the ball-room, where chairs were placed for the president, ladies of the *diplomaties*, cabinet ministers, &c. The music was excellent, and dancing was already in full force. And though there were assembled what is called *all Mexico*, the rooms are so large, that the crowd was not disagreeable, nor the heat oppressive.

Pictures of Queen Victoria were hung in the different large halls. The supper-tables were very handsome; and in fact the ball altogether was worthy of its object; for Messieurs les Anglais always do these things well when they attempt them.

The President took me to supper. The company walked in to the music of God save the Queen. After we had sat a little while, the President demanded silence, and in a short speech, proposed the health of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, which was drank by all the company standing. After supper, we continued dancing till nearly six in the morning; and when we got into the carriage it was broad daylight, and all the bells were ringing for mass!

This is the best ball we have seen here, without any exception; and is said to have cost eleven thousand dollars. There were certainly a great number of pretty faces at this fête, many pretty girls whom we had not seen before, and whom the English secretaries had contrived to *unearth*. Fine eyes are a mere *drug* — every one has them; large, dark, full orbs, with long silken lashes. As for diamonds, no man above the rank of a lépero marries in this country without presenting his bride with at least a pair of diamond ear-rings, or a pearl necklace with a diamond clasp. They are not always a proof of wealth, though they constitute it in themselves. Their owners may be very poor in other respects. They are considered a necessary of life; quite as much so as shoes and stockings.

June 2d. — On the 15th of April, the pontifical bulls arrived from Rome, confirming the election of

the Señor Posada to the Archieopiscopal dignity; and on Sunday last, the 31st of May, the consecration took place in the Cathedral with the greatest pomp. The presiding Bishop was the Señor Belaunzaran, the old Bishop of Linares; the two assisting Bishops were the Señor Madrid, a young, good-looking man, who having been banished from Mexico during the revolution, took refuge in Rome, where he obtained the favor of the Pope, who afterwards recommended him to an episcopal see in Mexico; and the Doctor Morales, formerly Bishop of Sonora. His *padrino* was the President, General Bustamante, who in this capacity presented his godson with the splendid pastoral ring, a solitary diamond of immense size. All the diplomatic body and the cabinet went in full uniform; chairs being placed for them on each side of the *crugia*, (the passage leading to the altar.) A dispute upon the subject of precedence arose between an excellency of the diplomatic corps, and the secretary of state, which seems likely to have disagreeable consequences. I had the pleasure of kneeling beside these illustrious persons for the space of three or four hours, for no seats were placed for the wives either of the diplomates or of the cabinet.

But the ceremony, though long, was very superb, the music fine, the quantity of jewels on the dresses of the bishops and priests, and on the holy vessels, &c., enormous. The bishops were arrayed in white velvet and gold, and their mitres were literally covered with diamonds. The gold candlesticks and golden basins, and golden vessels for holy water, and

golden incensories, reminded me of the description of the ornaments of the Jewish tabernacle in the days of Moses; of the "candlesticks of pure gold, with golden branches;" and "the tongs and snuff-dishes of pure gold;" or of the temple of Solomon, where the altar was of gold, and the table of gold, and the candlesticks, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censors were of pure gold. The pontifical vestments, destined for the elected primate, were all prepared; — sandals, amice, surplice, girdle, pectoral cross, stole, gown, vestment with open sleeves, (the dalmatica,) crosier, mitre, pontifical ring, &c. Magnificent chairs were prepared for the bishops, near the altar, and the president in uniform took his place amongst them. The presiding bishop took his seat alone, with his back to the altar, and the Señor Posada was led in by the assisting bishops, they with their mitres, he with his priest's cap on. Arrived before the presiding Bishop, he uncovered his head, and made a profound obeisance. These three then took their places on chairs placed in front; and the ceremony having begun, in case you should wish to have some idea of it, I shall endeavor to give it you, for I was so situated, that although the cathedral was crowded to excess, I could see and hear all that passed. Let me premise, however, that there was not one lépero, as they are always excluded on such occasions.

Posada and his assistant bishops rose, and uncovered their heads; and the bishop Morales turning to the presiding Bishop, said, "Most reverend father, the holy Catholic Mother Church requests you to

raise this Presbyter to the charge of the archbishopric."

"Have you an apostolical mandate?"

"We have."

"Read it."

An assistant priest then read the mandate in a loud voice; upon which they all sat down, the consecrator saying "Thanks be to God!" Then Posada kneeling before him, took an oath upon the Bible, which the Bishop held, concluding with these words — "So may God help me, and these his holy gospels." Then all sitting down, and resuming their mitres, the examination of the future Archbishop took place. It was very long, and at its conclusion, Posada knelt before the presiding Bishop and kissed his hand. To this succeeded the confession, every one standing uncovered before the altar, which was then sprinkled with incense. Then followed the mass, chanted.

The assistant bishops then led out the Señor Posada to the chapel, where they put on his sandals, and where he assumed the pectoral cross, amice, surplice, &c.; and arriving at the altar, read the office of the mass. He was then conducted again before the consecrating Bishop, who was seated with his mitre, and after saluting him reverently, he sat down. Then the Bishop, addressing him, said: "It is the duty of the Bishop to judge, interpret, consecrate, ordain, offer, baptize and confirm."

All then rose, and the Bishop prayed that the newly-elected primate might receive the grace of heaven. All the bishops and priests then prostrated

themselves, while the Litanies were sung. The presiding Bishop, rising, took the crosier, and prayed three times for a blessing on the Chosen One; thrice making on him the sign of the cross; and they continued to sing the Litanies; at the conclusion of which they all arose, took their seats and resumed their mitres, Posada alone kneeling before the Bishop.

The Bible was then placed upon his shoulders, while he remained prostrated, and the Bishop rising up, pronounced a solemn benediction upon him, while the hymn of "Veni Creator Spiritus," was sung in full chorus. Then the Bishop, dipping his hand in the holy chrism, anointed the primate's head, making on it the sign of the cross, saying, "Let thy head be anointed and consecrated with the celestial benediction, according to the pontifical mandate." The Bishop then anointed his hands, making in the same manner the sign of the cross, and saying, "May these hands be anointed with holy oil; and as Samuel anointed David a king and a prophet, so be thou anointed and consecrated." This was followed by a solemn prayer.

Then the crosier was blessed, and presented to the elected Archbishop with these words. "Receive the pastoral crosier, that thou mayest be humanely severe in correcting vices, exercising judgment without wrath, &c." The blessing of the ring followed, with solemn prayer, and being sprinkled with holy water, it was placed on the third finger of the right hand, the Bishop saying; "Receive the ring, which is a sign of faith; that, adorned with incorruptible faith, thou mayest guard inviolably the spouse of God, his Holy Church."

The Bible being then taken off the shoulders of the prostrate prelate, was presented to him with an injunction to receive and to preach the gospel. Finally, the Bishop bestowed on him the kiss of peace; and all the other bishops did so in their turn. Posada then retired, and his head and hands being washed, he soon after returned with the assistant bishops, carrying two lighted wax tapers, which he presented to the presiding Bishop, together with two loaves and two small barrels of wine, reverently kissing his hand. After this, the presiding Bishop washed his hands and mounted the steps of the altar, and the new primate received the sacrament.

The mitre was then blessed and placed upon his head, with a prayer by the Bishop, that thus, with his head armed and with the staff of the gospels, he might appear terrible to the adversaries of the True Faith. The gloves were next consecrated and drawn on his hands, the Bishop praying that his hands might be surrounded by the purity of the new man; and that as Jacob, when he covered his hands with goatskins, offered agreeable meats to his father, and received his paternal benediction, so he, in offering the Holy Sacrament, might obtain the benediction of his Heavenly Father. The Archbishop was then seated by the consecrating Bishop on his pontifical throne, and at the same moment, the hymn Te deum laudamus was chanted. During the hymn, the bishops, with their jewelled mitres, rose, and passing through the church, blessed the whole congregation, the new Archbishop still remaining near the altar, and without his mitre. When he returned to his seat, the

assistant bishops, including the consecrator, remained standing till the hymn was concluded.

The presiding Bishop then advancing, without his mitre, to the right hand of the Archbishop, said; "May thy hand be strengthened! May thy right hand be exalted! May justice and judgment be the preparation of thy See!" Then the organ pealed forth, and they chanted the hymn of "Gloria Patri." Long and solemn prayer followed; and then, all uncovered, stood beside the gospels, at the altar.

The Archbishop rose, and with mitre and crosier, pronounced a solemn blessing on all the people assembled. Then, while all knelt beside the altar, he said — "For many years." This he repeated thrice; the second time, in the middle of the altar, the third at the feet of the presiding Bishop. Then all rising, the Archbishop bestowed on each the kiss of peace, and the ceremony concluded.

When everything was over, our carriage not being visible amongst the crowd of vehicles, I returned home in that of the —— Minister, with him and his Attachés; after which, they and C——n returned to dine with the new Archbishop in his palace. A dish of sweetmeats was sent me from his table, which are so pretty, (probably the chef d'œuvre of the Nuns,) that I send them to you, to preserve as a memorial of the consecration of the first Mexican Archbishop — perhaps of the last!

LETTER THE NINETEENTH.

Mexican servants — Anecdotes — Remedies — An unsafe Porter — Galopinas — The reboso — The sarape — Women-cooks — Foreign servants — Characteristics of Mexican servants — Servants' wages — Nun of the Santa Teresa — Motives for taking the veil.

June 3d.

You ask me to tell you how I find the Mexican servants. Hitherto I had avoided the ungrateful theme, from very weariness of it. The badness of the servants, is an unfailing source of complaint even amongst Mexicans; much more so amongst foreigners, especially on their first arrival. We hear of their addiction to stealing, their laziness, drunkenness, dirtiness, with a host of other vices. That these complaints are frequently just, there can be no doubt, but the evil might be remedied to a great extent. In the first place, servants are constantly taken without being required to bring a recommendation from their last place; and in the next, recommendations are constantly given, whether from indolence or mistaken kindness to servants who do not deserve them. A servant who has lived in a dozen different houses, staying about a month in each, is not thought the worse of on that account. As the love of finery is inherent in them all, even more so than in other

daughters of Eve, a girl will go to service merely to earn sufficient to buy herself an embroidered chemise; and if, in addition to this, she can pick up a pair of small old satin shoes, she will tell you she is tired of working, and going home to rest, "*para descansar.*" So little is necessary, when one can contentedly live on tortillas and chile, sleep on a mat, and dress in rags!

A decent old woman, who came to the house to wash shortly after our arrival in this country, left us at the end of a month, "*para descansar.*" Soon after, she used to come with her six children, they and herself all in rags, and beg the gardener to give her any *odds and ends* of vegetables he could spare. My maid asked her, why, being so poor, she had left a good place, where she got twelve dollars a month. "Jesus!" said she, "if you only knew the pleasure of doing nothing!"

I wished to bring up a little girl as a servant, having her taught to read, sew, &c. A child of twelve years old, one of a large family, who subsisted upon charity, was procured for me; and I promised her mother that she should be taught to read, taken regularly to church, and instructed in all kinds of work. She was rather pretty, and very intelligent, though extremely indolent; and though she had no stockings, would consent to wear nothing but dirty white satin shoes, too short for her foot. Once a week, her mother, a tall, slatternly woman, with long tangled hair, and a cigar in her mouth, used to come to visit her, accompanied by a friend, a friend's friend, and a train of girls, her daughters. The

housekeeper would give them some dinner, after which they would all light their cigars, and, together with the little Josefita, sit and howl and bemoan themselves, crying and lamenting her sad fate in being obliged to go out to service. After these visits, Josefita was fit for nothing. If desired to sew, she would sit looking so miserable, and doing so little, that it seemed better to allow her to leave her work alone. Then, tolerably contented, she would sit on a mat, doing nothing, her hands folded and her eyes fixed on vacancy.

According to promise, I took her several times to see her mother, but one day being occupied, I sent her alone in the carriage, with charge to the servants to bring her safely back. In the evening, she returned, accompanied by her whole family, all crying and howling; "For the love of the Most Holy Virgin, Señora mia! Por la purissima concepcion!" &c., &c., &c. I asked what had happened, and after much difficulty discovered that their horror was occasioned by my having sent her alone in the carriage. It happened that the Countess S—— was in the drawing-room, and to her I related the cause of the uproar. To my astonishment, she assured me that the woman was in this instance right, and that it was very dangerous to send a girl of twelve years old from one street to another, in the power of the coachman and footman. Finding from such good authority that this was the case, I begged the woman to be contented with seeing her daughter once a month, when if she could not come herself, I should send her under proper protection. She agreed; but

one day having given Josefita permission to spend the night at her mother's, I received next morning a dirty note, nearly illegible, which, after calling down the protection of the Virgin upon me, concluded — "but with much sorrow I must take my child from the most illustrious protection of your Excellency, for she needs to rest herself, (es preciso que descanse,) and is tired for the present of working." The woman then returned to beg, which she considered infinitely less degrading.

Against this nearly universal indolence and indifference to earning money, the heads of families have to contend; as also against thieving and dirtiness; yet I think the remedy much easier than it appears. If on the one hand, no one were to receive a servant into their house, without respectable references, especially from their last place, and if their having remained one year in the same house were considered necessary to their being received into another, unless from some peculiar circumstances; and if on the other hand it were considered as unjust and dangerous, as it really is, to recommend a servant who has been guilty of stealing, as being "*muy honrado*," very honest, some improvement might soon take place.

A porter was recommended to us as "muy honrado;" not from his last place, but from one before it. He was a well-dressed, sad-looking individual; and at the same time we took his wife as washerwoman, and his brother as valet to our attaché, thus having the whole family under our roof, wisely taking it for granted that he being recommended as particularly honest, his relations were

"all honorable men." An English lady happened to call on me; and a short time after I went to return her visit; when she informed me that the person who had opened the door for her was a notorious thief, whom the police had long been in search of; that she had feared sending a servant to warn us of our danger, lest guessing the purport of her message, he might rob the house before leaving it. We said nothing to the man that evening, but he looked paler and more miserable than usual, probably foreseeing what would be the result of Mrs. ——'s visit. The next morning C——n sent for him and dismissed him, giving him a month's wages, that he might not be tempted to steal from immediate want. His face grew perfectly livid, but he made no remark. In half an hour he returned and begged to speak with C——n. He confessed that the crime of which he concluded he was accused, he had in fact committed; that he had been tempted to a gambling house, while he had in his pocket a large sum of money belonging to his master. After losing his own money, he tried his fortune with what was not his own; lost the whole sum, then pawned a valuable shawl worth several hundred dollars, with which also he had been entrusted; and having lost everything, in despair made his escape from Mexico. He remained in concealment for some time, till hearing that we wanted a porter, he ventured to present himself to the housekeeper with his former certificate. He declared himself thoroughly repentant — that this was his first, and would be his last crime — but who can trust the good resolutions of a gambler!

We were obliged to send him away, especially as the other servants already had some suspicions concerning him; and everything stolen in the house would in future have been attributed to him. The gentleman who had recommended him, afterwards confessed that he always had strong suspicions of this man's honesty, and knew him to be so determined a gambler, that he had pawned all he possessed, even his wife's clothes, to obtain money for that purpose. Now as a porter in Mexico has pretty much at his disposal the property and even the lives of the whole family, it is certainly most blamable to recommend to that situation a man whose honesty is more than doubtful. We afterwards procured two soldiers from the *Invalidos*, old Spaniards, to act in that capacity, who had no other foiblesse but that of being constantly drunk. We at length found two others, who only got tipsy alternately, so that we considered ourselves very well off.

We had a long series of *galopinas*, kitchen-maids, and the only one who brought a first-rate character with her, robbed the housekeeper. The money, however, was recovered, and was found to have been placed by the girl in the hands of a rich and apparently respectable coach-maker. He refunded it to the rightful owner, and the galopina was punished by a month's imprisonment, which he should have shared with her. One of the most disagreeable customs of the women-servants, is that of wearing their long hair hanging down at its full length, matted, uncombed, and always in the way. I cannot imagine how the Mexican ladies, who complain of this, permit it. Flow-

ing hair sounds very picturesque, but when it is very dirty, and suspended over the soup, it is not a pretty picture.

The reboso, in itself graceful and convenient, has the disadvantage of being the greatest cloak for all untidiness, uncombed hair and raggedness, that ever was invented. Even in the better classes, it occasions much indolence in the toilette, but in the common people, its effect is overwhelming. When the reboso drops off, or is displaced by chance, we see what they would be without it! As for the sarape, it is both convenient and graceful, especially on horseback; but though Indian in its origin, the custom of covering the lower part of the face with it, is taken from the Spanish cloak; and the opportunity which both sarape and reboso afford for concealing large knives about the person, as also for enveloping both face and figure so as to be scarcely recognisable, is no doubt the cause of the many murders which take place amongst the lower orders, in moments of excitement and drunkenness. If they had not these knives at hand, their rage would probably cool, or a fair fight would finish the matter, and if they could not wear these knives concealed, I presume they would be prohibited from carrying them.

As for taking a woman-cook in Mexico, one must have strong nerves and a good appetite to eat what she dresses, however palatable, after having seen her. One look at her flowing locks, one glance at her reboso, *et c'est fini.* And yet the Mexican servants have their good qualities, and are a thousand times preferable to the foreign servants one finds in Mexi-

co; especially to the French. Bringing them with you is a dangerous experiment. In ten days they begin to fancy themselves ladies and gentlemen — the men have *Don* tacked to their name; and they either marry and set up shops, or become unbearably insolent. A tolerable French cook may occasionally be had, but you must pay his services their weight in gold, and wink at his extortions and robberies. There are one or two French *restaurans*, who will send you in a very good dinner at an extravagant price; and it is common in foreign houses, especially amongst the English, to adopt this plan whenever they give a large entertainment.

The Mexican servants have some never-failing good qualities. They are the perfection of civility — humble, obliging, excessively good-tempered, and very easily attached to those with whom they live; and if that *rara avis*, a good Mexican housekeeper, can be found, and that such may be met with I from experience can testify, then the troubles of the menage rest upon her shoulders, and accustomed as she is to the amiable weaknesses of her *compatriotes*, she is neither surprised nor disturbed by them.

As for wages, a good porter has from fifteen to twenty dollars per month; a coachman from twenty to thirty — many houses keep two or even three coachmen; one who drives from the box, one who rides postilion, and a third for emergencies. Our friend ——, who has many horses, mules and carriages, has four; and pays forty dollars per month to his head coachman; the others in proportion. A French cook has about thirty dollars — a housekeeper

from twelve to fifteen; a major-domo about twenty or more; a footman six or seven; galopine and chambermaid five or six; a gardener from twelve to fifteen. Sewing-girls have about three reals per diem. Porter, coachman and gardener have their wives and families in the house, which would be an annoyance, were the houses not so large. The men-servants generally are much cleaner and better dressed than the women.

One circumstance is remarkable; that, dirty as the women-servants are, and notwithstanding the enormous size of Mexican houses and Mexican families, the houses themselves are, generally speaking, the perfection of cleanliness. This must be due either to a good housekeeper, which is rarely to be found, or to the care taken by the mistress of the house herself. That private houses should have this advantage over churches and theatres, only proves that ladies know how to manage these matters better than gentlemen, so that one is inclined to wish *á la Martineau*, that the Mexican police were entirely composed of old women.

12*th*. — I have formed an acquaintance with a very amiable and agreeable nun in the convent of the Santa Teresa, one of the strictest orders. I have only seen her twice, through a grating. She is a handsome woman of good family, and it is said of a remarkably joyous disposition; fond of music and dancing, and gay society, yet at the age of eighteen, contrary to the wishes of all her family, she took the veil, and declares she has never repented of it. Although I cannot see her, I can hear her voice, and talk

to her through a turning wooden screen, which has a very mysterious effect. She gives me an account of her occupations and of the little events that take place in her small world within; whilst I bring her news from the world without. The common people have the greatest veneration for the holy sisterhood, and I generally find there a number of women with baskets, and men carrying parcels or letters; some asking their advice or assistance, others executing their commissions, bringing them vegetables or bread, and listening to the sound of their voice with the most eager attention. My friend, the Madre ——, has promised to dress a number of wax figures for me, in the exact costume of all the different nuns in Mexico, beginning with that of her own convent.

I have now seen three nuns take the veil; and, next to a death, consider it the saddest event that can occur in this nether sphere; yet the frequency of these human sacrifices here is not so strange as might at first appear. A young girl, who knows nothing of the world, who, as it too frequently happens, has at home neither amusement nor instruction, and no society abroad, who from childhood is under the dominion of her confessor, and who firmly believes that by entering a convent she becomes sure of heaven; who moreover finds there a number of companions of her own age, and of older women who load her with praises and caresses — it is not, after all, astonishing that she should consent to insure her salvation on such easy terms.

Add to this the splendor of the ceremony, of which she is the sole object; the cynosure of all approving

eyes. A girl of sixteen finds it hard to resist all this. I am told that more girls are smitten by the ceremony, than by anything else, and am inclined to believe it, from the remarks I have heard made on these occasions by young girls in my vicinity. What does she lose? A husband and children? Probably she has seen no one who has touched her heart. Most probably she has hitherto seen no men, or at least conversed with none but her brothers, her uncles, or her confessor. She has perhaps also felt the troubles of a Mexican ménage. The society of men? She will still see her confessor, and she will have occasional visits from reverend padres and right reverend bishops.

Some of these convents are not entirely free from scandal. Amongst the monks, there are many who are openly a disgrace to their calling, though I firmly believe that by far the greater number lead a life of privation and virtue. Their conduct can, to a certain extent, be judged of by the world; but the pale nuns, devout and pure, immured in the cloister for life, kneeling before the shrine, or chanting hymns in the silence of the night, a veil both truly and allegorically must shade their virtues or their failings. The nuns of the Santa Teresa and of other strict orders, who live sparingly, profess the most severe rules, and have no servants or boarders, enjoy a universal reputation for virtue and sanctity. They consider the other convents worldly, and their motto is, "All or nothing; the world or the cloister." Each abbess adds a stricter rule, a severer penance than her predecessor, and in this they glory. My friend the

Madre —— frequently says—"Were I to be born again, I should choose, above every lot in life, to be a nun of the Santa Teresa, but of no other convent." . . . .

It is strange how, all the world over, makind seems to expect from those who assume religion as a profession, a degree of superhuman perfection. Their failings are insisted upon. Every eye is upon them to mark whatsoever may be amiss in their conduct. Their virtues, their learning, their holy lives — nothing will avail them, if one blot can be discovered in their character. There must be no moral blemish in the priesthood. In the Catholic religion, where more is professed, still more is demanded, and the errors of one padre or one ecclesiastic seem to throw a shade over the whole community to which they belong.

LETTER THE TWENTIETH.

The convent-entry — Dialogue — A chair in church — Arrival of the nun — Dress — José Maria — Crowd — Withdrawal of the black curtain — The taking of the veil — The sermon — A dead body — Another victim — Convent of the Encarnacion — Attempt at a hymn — Invitation — Morning visit — The nun and her mother — Banquet — Taking leave — Ceremony of the veil-taking — A beautiful victim — The last look — Presentation to the bishop — Reflections — Verses.

4th June.

Some days ago, having received a message from *my nun*, that a girl was about to take the veil in her convent, I went there about six o'clock, and knowing that the church on these occasions is apt to be crowded to suffocation, I proceeded to the *reja*, and speaking to an invisible within, requested to know in what part of the church I could have a place. Upon which a voice replied —

"Hermanita, (my sister) I am rejoiced te see you. You shall have a place beside the godmother."

"Many thanks, Hermanita. Which way shall I go?"

Voice. "You shall go through the sacristy. José Maria!"

José Maria, a thin, pale, lank individual, with hollow cheeks, who was standing near like a page in waiting, sprang forward — "*Madrecita*, I am here!"

Voice. "José Maria — That lady is the Señore de C——n. You will conduct her excellency to the front of the grating, and give her a chair."

After I had thanked the *voice* for her kindness in attending to me on a day when she was so much occupied with other affairs, the obsequious José Maria led the way, and I followed him through the sacristy into the church, where there were already a few kneeling figures; and thence into the railed-off enclosure destined for the relatives of the future nun, where I was permitted to sit down in a comfortable velvet chair. I had been there but a little while when the aforesaid José Maria reappeared, picking his steps as if he were walking upon eggs in a sick room. He brought me a message from the Madre ——, that the nun had arrived, and that the madrecita wished to know if I should like to give her an embrace, before the ceremony began. I therefore followed my guide back into the sacristy, where the future nun was seated beside her godmother, and in the midst of her friends and relations, about thirty in all.

She was arrayed in pale blue satin, with diamonds, pearls and a crown of flowers. She was literally smothered in blonde and jewels; and her face was flushed, as well it might be, for she had passed the day in taking leave of her friends at a fête they had given her; and had then, according to custom, been paraded through the town in all her finery. And now, her last hour was at hand. When I came in, she rose and embraced me with as much cordiality as if we had known each other for years. Beside her sat

the Madrina, also in white satin and jewels; all the relations being likewise decked out in their finest array. The nun kept laughing every now and then, in the most unnatural and hysterical manner, as I thought, apparently to impress us with the conviction of her perfect happiness; for it is a great point of honor, amongst girls similarly situated, to look as cheerful and gay as possible; — the same feeling, though in a different degree, which induces the gallant highwayman to jest in the presence of the multitude, when the hangman's cord is within an inch of his neck; the same which makes a gallant general, whose life is forfeited, command his men to fire on him; the same which makes the Hindoo widow mount the funeral pile without a tear in her eye, or a sigh on her lips. If the robber were to be strangled in a corner of his dungeon; if the general were to be put to death privately in his own apartment; if the widow were to be burnt quietly on her own hearth; if the nun were to be secretly smuggled in at the convent gate like a bale of contraband goods, — we might hear another tale. This girl was very young, but by no means pretty; on the contrary, rather *disgraciée par la nature;* and perhaps a knowledge of her own want of attractions may have caused the world to have few charms for her.

But José Maria cut short my train of reflections, by requesting me to return to my seat before the crowd arrived, which I did forthwith. Shortly after, the church doors were thrown open, and a crowd burst in, every one struggling to obtain the best seat. Musicians entered, carrying desks and music-books, and

placed themselves in two rows, on either side of the enclosure where I was. Then the organ struck up its solemn psalmody, and was followed by the gay music of the band. Rockets were let off outside the church, and, at the same time, the Madrina and all the relations entered, and knelt down in front of the grating which looks into the convent, but before which hung a dismal black curtain. I left my chair, and knelt down beside the godmother.

Suddenly, the curtain was withdrawn, and the picturesque beauty of the scene within, baffles all description. Beside the altar, which was in a blaze of light, was a perfect mass of crimson and gold drapery; the walls, the antique chairs, the table before which the priests sat, all hung with the same splendid material. The Bishop wore his superb mitre and robes of crimson and gold; the attendant priests also glittering in crimson and gold embroidery.

In contrast to these, five-and-twenty figures, entirely robed in black from head to foot, were ranged on each side of the room, prostrate, their faces touching the ground; and in their hands immense lighted tapers. On the foreground was spread a purple carpet, bordered round with a garland of freshly gathered flowers, roses and carnations and heliotrope, the only things that looked real and living in the whole scene; and in the middle of this knelt the novice, still arrayed in her blue satin, white lacé veil and jewels; and also with a great lighted taper in her hand.

The black nuns then rose, and sang a hymn, every now and then falling on their faces, and touching the

floor with their foreheads. The whole looked like an incantation, or a scene in Robert le Diable. The novice was then raised from the ground, and led to the feet of the Bishop, who examined her as to her vocation, and gave her his blessing; and once more the black curtain fell between us and them.

In the *second act*, she was lying prostrate on the floor, disrobed of her profane dress, and covered over with a black cloth, while the black figures kneeling round her, chanted a hymn. She was now dead to the world. The sunbeams had faded away, as if they would not look upon the scene, and all the light was concentrated in one great mass upon the convent group.

Again she was raised. All the blood had rushed into her face, and her attempt at a smile was truly painful. She then knelt before the Bishop, and received the benediction, with the sign of the cross, from a white hand with the pastoral ring. She then went round alone to embrace all the dark phantoms as they stood motionless; and as each dark shadow clasped her in its arms, it seemed like the dead welcoming a new arrival to the shades.

But I forget the sermon, which was delivered by a fat priest, who elbowed his way with some difficulty through the crowd to the grating, panting and in a prodigious heat, and ensconced himself in a great arm-chair, close beside us. He assured her that she "had chosen the good part, which could not be taken away from her;" that she was now one of the elect, "chosen from amongst the wickedness and dangers of the world;" — (picked out like a plum from a pie.)

He mentioned with pity and contempt those who were "yet struggling in the great Babylon;" and compared their miserable fate with hers, the Bride of Christ, who, after suffering a few privations here during a short term of years, should be received at once into a kingdom of glory. The whole discourse was well calculated to rally her fainting spirits, if fainting they were, and to inspire us with a great disgust for ourselves.

When the sermon was concluded, the music again struck up — the heroine of the day came forward, and stood before the grating, to take her last look of this wicked world. Down fell the black curtain. Up rose the relations, and I accompanied them into the sacristy. Here they coolly lighted their cigars, and very philosophically discoursed upon the exceeding good fortune of the new-made nun, and on her evident delight and satisfaction with her own situation. As we did not follow her behind the scenes, I could not give my opinion on this point. Shortly after, one of the gentlemen civilly led me to my carriage, and *so it was.*

As we were returning home, some soldiers rode up and stopped the carriage, desiring the coachman to take the other side of the aqueduct, to avoid the body of a man, who had just been murdered within a few doors of our house.

In the Convent of the Incarnation, I saw another girl sacrificed in a similar manner. She was received there without a dowry, on account of the exceeding fineness of her voice. She little thought what a fatal gift it would prove to her. The most cruel part of

all was, that wishing to display her fine voice to the public, they made her sing a hymn alone, on her knees, her arms extended in the form of a cross, before all the immense crowd; "Ancilla Cristi Sum," "The Bride of Christ I am." She was a good-looking girl, fat and comely, who would probably have led a comfortable life in the world, for which she seemed well fitted; most likely without one touch of romance or enthusiasm in her composition; but having the unfortunate honor of being niece to two chanoines, she was thus honorably provided for without expense, in her nineteenth year. As might be expected, her voice faltered, and instead of singing, she seemed inclined to cry out. Each note came slowly, heavily, tremblingly; and at last she nearly fell forward exhausted, when two of the sisters caught and supported her.

I had almost made up my mind to see no more such scenes, which, unlike pulque and bull-fights, I dislike more and more upon trial; when we received an invitation, which it was not easy to refuse, but was the more painful to accept, being acquainted, though slightly, with the victim. I send you the printed note of invitation.

"On Wednesday, the —— of this month, at six o'clock in the evening, my daughter, Doña Maria de la Concepcion, P——e ——, will assume the habit of a Nun of the choir and the black veil in the Convent of Our Lady of the Incarnation. I have the honor to inform you of this, entreating you to co-operate with your presence, in the solemnity of this

act, a favor which will be highly esteemed by your affectionate servant, who kisses your hand.

"MARIA JOSEFA DE ——.

"Mexico, June ——, 1840."

Having gone out in the carriage to pay some visits, I suddenly recollected that it was the very morning of the day in which this young girl was to take the veil, and also that it was necessary to inquire where I was to be placed; for as to entering the church with the crowd on one of these occasions, it is out of the question; particularly when the girl being, as in the present case, of distinguished family, the ceremony is expected to be peculiarly magnificent. I accordingly called at the house, was shown up stairs, and to my horror, found myself in the midst of a "goodlie companie," in rich array, consisting of the relations of the family, to the number of about a hundred persons; the Bishop himself in his purple robes and amethysts, a number of priests, the father of the young lady in his general's uniform; she herself in purple velvet, with diamonds and pearls, and a crown of flowers; the *corsage* of her gown entirely covered with little bows of ribbon of divers colors, which her friends had given her; each adding one, like stones thrown on a cairn in memory of the departed. She had also short sleeves and white satin shoes.

Being very handsome, with fine black eyes, good teeth and fresh color, and above all with the beauty of youth, for she is but eighteen, she was not disfigured even by this overloaded dress. Her mother, on the contrary, who was to act the part of Madrina, who wore a dress fac-simile, and who was pale and

sad, her eyes almost extinguished with weeping, looked like a picture of misery in a ball-dress. In the adjoining room, long tables were laid out, on which servants were placing refreshments for the fête about to be given on this joyous occasion. I felt somewhat shocked, and inclined to say with Paul Pry, "Hope I don't intrude." But my apologies were instantly cut short, and I was welcomed with true Mexican hospitality; repeatedly thanked for my kindness in coming to see the nun, and hospitably pressed to join the family feast. I only got off upon a promise of returning at half past five to accompany them to the ceremony, which, in fact, I greatly preferred to going there alone.

I arrived at the hour appointed, and being led up stairs by the Senator Don —— ——, found the morning party, with many additions, lingering over the dessert. There was some gaiety, but evidently forced. It reminded me of a marriage-feast previous to the departure of the bride, who is about to be separated from her family for the first time. Yet how different in fact this banquet, where the mother and daughter met together for the last time on earth!

At stated periods, indeed, the mother may hear her daughter's voice speaking to her as from the depths of the tomb; but she may never more fold her in her arms, never more share in her joys or in her sorrows, or nurse her in sickness; and when her own last hour arrives, though but a few streets divide them, she may not give her dying blessing to the child who has been for so many years the pride of her eyes and heart.

I have seen no country where families are so knit together as in Mexico, where the affections are so concentrated, or where such devoted respect and obedience are shown by the married sons and daughters to their parents. In that respect they always remain as little children. I know many families, of which the married branches continue to live in their father's house, forming a sort of small colony, and living in the most perfect harmony. They cannot bear the idea of being separated, and nothing but dire necessity ever forces them to leave their *fatherland.* To all the accounts which travellers give them of the pleasures to be met with in European capitals, they turn a deaf ear. Their families are in Mexico — their parents, and sisters, and relatives — and there is no happiness for them elsewhere. The greater therefore is the sacrifice which those parents make, who from religious motives devote their daughters to a conventual life.

—— however, was furious at the whole affair, which he said was entirely against the mother's consent, though that of the father had been obtained; and pointed out to me the confessor whose influence had brought it about. The girl herself was now very pale, but evidently resolved to conceal her agitation, and the mother seemed as if she could shed no more tears — quite exhausted with weeping. As the hour for the ceremony drew near, the whole party became more grave and sad, all but the priests, who were smiling and talking together in groups. The girl was not still a moment. She kept walking hastily through the house, taking leave of the ser-

vants, and naming probably her last wishes about everything. She was followed by her younger sisters, all in tears.

But it struck six, and the priests intimated that it was time to move. She and her mother went down stairs alone, and entered the carriage which was to drive them through all the principal streets, to show the nun to the public according to custom, and to let them take their last look, they of her, and she of them. As they got in, we all crowded to the balconies to see her take leave of her house, her aunts saying, "Yes child, *despidete de tu casa*, take leave of your house, for you will never see it again!" Then came sobs from the sisters, and many of the gentlemen, ashamed of their emotion, hastily quitted the room. I hope, for the sake of humanity, I did not rightly interpret the look of constrained anguish which the poor girl threw from the window of the carriage at the home of her childhood.

They drove off, and the relations prepared to walk in procession to the church. I walked with the Count S——o; the others followed in pairs. The church was very brilliantly illuminated, and as we entered, the band was playing one of *Strauss's* waltzes! The crowd was so tremendous that we were nearly squeezed to a jelly in getting to our places. I was carried off my feet between two fat Señoras in mantillas and shaking diamond pendants, exactly as if I had been packed between two movable feather beds.

They gave me, however, an excellent place, quite close to the grating, beside the Countess de S——o,

that is to say, a place to kneel on. A great bustle and much preparation seemed to be going on within the convent, and veiled figures were flitting about, whispering, arranging, &c. Sometimes, a skinny old dame would come close to the grating, and lifting up her veil, bestow upon the pensive public a generous view of a very haughty and very wrinkled visage of some seventy years standing, and beckon into the church for the major-domo of the convent, (an excellent and profitable situation by the way,) or for padre this or that. Some of the holy ladies recognised and spoke to me through the grating.

But, at the discharge of fireworks outside the church, the curtain was dropped, for this was the signal that the nun and her mother had arrived. An opening was made in the crowd as they passed into the church, and the girl, kneeling down, was questioned by the Bishop, but I could not make out the dialogue, which was carried on in a low voice. She then passed into the convent by a side door, and her mother, quite exhausted and nearly in hysterics, was supported through the crowd to a place beside us, in front of the grating. The music struck up; the curtain was again drawn aside. The scene was as striking here as in the convent of the Santa Teresa, but not so lugubrious. The nuns, all ranged around and carrying lighted tapers in their hands, were dressed in mantles of bright blue, with a gold plate on the left shoulder. Their faces, however, were covered with deep black veils. The girl, kneeling in front, and also bearing a heavy lighted taper, looked beautiful, with her dark hair and rich dress, and the

long black lashes resting on her glowing face. The churchmen near the illuminated and magnificently-decked altar, formed as usual a brilliant back ground to the picture. The ceremony was the same as on the former occasion, but there was no sermon.

The most terrible thing to witness was the last, straining, anxious look which the mother gave her daughter through the grating. She had seen her child pressed to the arms of strangers, and welcomed to her new home. She was no longer hers. All the sweet ties of nature had been rudely severed, and she had been forced to consign her, in the very bloom of youth and beauty, at the very age in which she most required a mother's care, and when she had but just fulfilled the promise of her childhood, to a living tomb. Still, as long as the curtain had not fallen, she could gaze upon her, as upon one on whom, though dead, the coffin-lid is not yet closed.

But while the new-made nun was in a blaze of light, and distinct on the foreground, so that we could mark each varying expression of her face, the crowd in the church, and the comparative faintness of the light, probably made it difficult for her to distinguish her mother; for, knowing that the end was at hand, she looked anxiously and hurriedly into the church, without seeming able to fix her eyes on any particular object; while her mother seemed as if her eyes were glazed, so intently were they fixed upon her daughter.

Suddenly, and without any preparation, down fell the black curtain like a pall, and the sobs and tears of the family broke forth. One beautiful little child

was carried out almost in fits. Water was brought to the poor mother; and at last, making our way with difficulty through the dense crowd, we got into the sacristy. "I declare," said the Countess —— to me, wiping her eyes, "it is worse than a marriage!" I expressed my horror at the sacrifice of a girl so young that she could not possibly have known her own mind. Almost all the ladies agreed with me, especially all who had daughters, but many of the old gentlemen were of a different opinion. The young men were decidedly of my way of thinking, but many young girls, who were conversing together, seemed rather to envy their friend, who had looked so pretty and graceful, and "so happy," and whose dress "suited her so well;" and to have no objection to "go, and do likewise."

I had the honor of a presentation to the Bishop, a fat and portly prelate, with good manners, and well besuiting his priestly garments. I amused myself, while we waited for the carriages, by looking over a pamphlet which lay on the table, containing the ceremonial of the veil-taking. When we rose to go, all the ladies of the highest rank devoutly kissed the Bishop's hand, and I went home, thinking by what law of God a child can thus be dragged from the mother who bore and bred her, and immured in a cloister for life, amongst strangers, to whom she has no tie, and towards whom she owes no duty. That a convent may be a blessed shelter from the calamities of life, a haven for the unprotected, a resting-place for the weary, a safe and holy asylum, where a new family and kind friends await those whose

natural ties are broken and whose early friends are gone, I am willing to admit; but it is not in the flower of youth, that the warm heart should be consigned to the cold cloister. Let the young take their chance of sunshine or of storm. The calm and shady retreat is for helpless and unprotected old age.

——, to whom I described one of these ceremonies, wrote some verses, suggested by my account of them, which I send you.

In Tropic gorgeousness, the Lord of Day
  To the bright chambers of the west retired,
And with the glory of his parting ray,
  The hundred domes of Mexico he fired,
When I, with vague and solemn awe inspired,
  Entered the Incarnation's sacred fane.
The vaulted roof, the dim aisle far retired,
  Echoed the deep-toned organ's holy strain
  Which through the incensed air did mournfully complain.

The veiling curtain suddenly withdrew,
  Op'ning a glorious altar to the sight,
Where crimson intermixed its regal hue
  With gold and jewels that outblazed the light
Of the huge tapers near them flaming bright
  From golden stands; — the Bishop, mitre-crowned
Stood stately near; — in order due around
  The Sisterhood knelt down, their brows upon the ground.

The Novice entered: To her doom she went
  Gems on her robes, and flowers upon her brow.
Virgin of tender years, poor innocent;
  Pause — ere thou speak th' irrevocable vow.
What if thy heart should change, thy spirit fail?
  She kneels. The black-robed sisters cease to bow.
They raise a hymn which seems a funeral wail,
While o'er the pageant falls the dark, lugubrious veil.

Again the veil up. On earth she lies —
With the drear mantle of the pall spread o'er,
The new-made nun, the living sacrifice,
Dead to this world of our's for evermore!
The sun his parting rays has ceased to pour,
As loth to lend his light to such a scene . . .
The Sisters raise her from the sacred floor,
Supporting her their holy arms between,
The mitred priest stands up with patriarchal mien,

And speaks the Benediction; all is done.
A life-in-death must her long years consume.
She clasped her new-made sisters one by one.
As the black shadows their embraces gave,
They seemed like spectres from their place of doom,
Stealing from out eternal night's blind cave,
To meet their comrade new, and hail her to the grave.

The curtain fell again, the scene was o'er,
The pageant gone — its glitter and its pride,
And it would be a pageant and no more,
But for the maid miscalled the Heavenly Bride.
If I, an utter stranger, unallied
To her by slightest ties, some grief sustain,
What feels the yearning mother from whose side
Is torn the child whom she hath reared in vain,
To share her joys no more, no more to soothe her pain!

LETTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

San Agustin — The gambling fête. — The beauties of the village — The road from Mexico — Entry to San Agustin — The gambling houses — San Antonio — The Pedregal — Last day of the fête — The Cock-pit — The Boxes — The Cock-fight — Decorum — Comparisons — Dinner — Ball at Calvario — House of General Moran — View of the gambling tables — The Advocate — Ball at the Plaza de Gallos — Return to Mexico — Reflections — Conversation between two Ministers

15th June.

SINCE my last letter we have been at San Agustin de las Cuevas, which, when I last saw it, was a deserted village, but which during three days in the year, presents the appearance of a vast bee-hive or ant-hill. San Agustin! At the name how many hearts throb with emotion! How many hands are mechanically thrust into empty pockets! How many visions of long-vanished golden ounces flit before aching eyes! What faint crowing of wounded cocks! What tinkling of guitars and blowing of horns come upon the ear! Some indeed there be, who can look round upon their well-stored hacienda and easy rolling carriages, and remember the day when with threadbare coat, and stake of three modest ounces, they first courted Fortune's favors; and, who being then indigent and enjoying an indifferent reputation, found themselves, at the conclusion of a few successive San Agustins, the fortunate propri-

etors of gold, and land, and houses; and moreover with an unimpeachable fame; for he who can fling gold dust in his neighbor's eyes, prevents him from seeing too clearly. But these favorites of the blind goddess are few and far between, and they have for the most part, with a view to greater security, become holders or sharers of banks at San Agustin, thus investing their fortune in a secure fund; more so decidedly, if we may believe the newspaper reports, than in the Bank of the United States at this present writing.

Time, in its revolutions, whirling all things out of their places, has made no change in the annual fête of San Agustin. Fashions alter. The graceful mantilla gradually gives place to the ungraceful bonnet. The old painted coach, moving slowly like a caravan, with Guido's Aurora painted on its gaudy panels, is dismissed for the London-built carriage. Old customs have passed away. The ladies no longer sit on the door-sills, eating roast duck with their fingers, or with the aid of tortillas. Even the Chinampas have become stationary, and have occasionally joined the Continent. But the annual fête of San Agustin is built on a more solid foundation than taste, or custom, or floating soil. It is founded upon that love of gambling, which is said to be a passion inherent in our nature, and which is certainly impregnated with the Mexican constitution, in man, woman and child. The beggars gamble at the corners of the streets, or under the arches; the little boys gamble in groups in the villages; the coachmen

and footmen gamble at the doors of the theatre, while waiting for their masters.

But while their hand is thus *kept in* all the year round, there are three days sacredly set apart annually, in which every accommodation is given to those who are bent upon ruining themselves or their neighbors; whilst every zest that society can afford, is held out to render the temptation more alluring. As religion is called in to sanctify everything, right or wrong; as the robber will plant a cross at the mouth of his cave, and the pulque shops do occasionally call themselves "Pulquerias of the Most Holy Virgin," so this season of gambling is fixed for the fête of *Pascua*, (Whitsunday) and the churches and the gambling-houses are thrown open simultaneously.

The village is in itself pretty and picturesque; and as a stone at its entry informs us, was built by the active Viceroy Revillagigedo, with the product, as —— assured us, of two lotteries. It is charmingly situated, in the midst of handsome villas and orchards, whose high walls, overtopped by fruit trees, border the narrow lanes. At this season, the trees are loaded with the yellow *chabacano* and the purple plum, already ripe; while the pear trees are bending under the weight of their fruit. The gardens are full of flowers; the roses in their last bloom, covering the ground with their pink leaves, and jasmine and sweet pease in profusion, making the air fragrant. The rainy season has scarce set in, though frequent showers have laid the dust, and refreshed the air.

The country villas are filled with all that is gayest, and most distinguished in Mexico, and every house and every room in the village has been hired for months in advance. The ladies are in their most elegant toilettes, and looking forward to a delightful whirl of dancing, cock-fighting, gambling, dining, dressing, and driving about.

The high-road leading from Mexico to San Agustin is covered with vehicles of every description; carriages, diligences, hackney-coaches, carts and carratelas. Those who are not fortunate enough to possess any wheeled conveyance, come out on horse, ass or mule; single, double, or treble, if necessary; and many hundreds, with visions of silver before their eyes, and a few *clacos*, (pence) hid under their rags, trudge out on foot. The President himself, in carriage and six, and attended by his aids-de-camp, sanctions by his presence the amusements of the fête. The Mexican generals and other officers, follow in his wake, and the gratifying spectacle may not unfrequently be seen, of the President leaning from his box in the *plaza de gallos*, and betting upon a cock, with a coatless, bootless, hatless and probably worthless ragamuffin in the pit. Every one, therefore, however humble his degree, has the pleasure, while following his speculative inclinations, of reflecting that he treads in the steps of the magnates of the land; and as Sam Weller would say; "Vot a consolation that must be to his feelings!"

At all events, nothing can be gayer than the appearance of the village, as your carriage makes its way through the narrow lanes into the principal

plaza, amidst the assembled crowd of coaches and foot-passengers; though the faces of the people bear evidence that pleasure alone has not brought them to San Agustin. All round the square are the gambling-houses, where for three nights and three days every table is occupied. At the principal *montes* nothing is played but gold, but as there is accommodation for all classes, so there are silver tables in the inferior houses, while outside are rows of tables on which are heaps of copper, covered with a ragged awning, and surrounded by léperos and blanketed Indians, playing monte in imitation of their betters, though on a scale more suited to their finances.

Having left Mexico early in the morning, we stopped to breakfast at San Antonio, a noble hacienda, about four leagues from Mexico, belonging to the Dowager Marquesa de Vivanco, where we breakfasted with a large party. It is a fine solid mass of building, and as you enter the court-yard, through a deep archway, the great outhouses, stables, and especially the granary, look like remains of feudalism, they are on so large and magnificent a scale. It is an immense and valuable property, producing both maize and maguey, and the hospitality of the family, who are amongst our earliest friends here, is upon as large a scale as everything that belongs to them. We had a splendid breakfast, in a fine old hall, and staid but a short time to visit the gardens and the chapel, as we were anxious to arrive at San Agustin in time for the cock-fight.

It is singular, that while San Agustin is situated

in the midst of the most fertile and productive country, there should lie opposite to it, and bounded as it were by the graceful Peruvian trees and silver poplars which surround a small church on the other side of the high road, a great tract of black lava, sterile, bleak, and entirely destitute of vegetation, called the *Pedregal.* This covers the country all along to San Agustin and to the base of the mountain of Ajusco, which lies behind it, contrasting strangely with the beautiful groves and gardens in its neighborhood, and looking as if it had been cursed for some crime committed there. The high road, which runs nearly in a direct line from the hacienda to San Agustin, is broad and in tolerable repair; but before arriving there, it is so little attended to, that during the rainy season it might be passed in canoes; yet this immense formation of ferruginous lava and porphyritic rock lies conveniently in its vicinity. A large sum, supposed to be employed in mending the road, is collected annually at the toll, close to San Antonio. For each carriage two dollars are asked, and for carts and animals in proportion. The proprietor of this toll or *postazgo* is also the owner of the plaza de gallos, where a dollar is paid for entry, the sums produced by which go exclusively to enrich the same individual. The government has no advantage from it. . . . .

The last day of the fête is considered the best, and it is most crowded on that day, both by families from Mexico and by foreigners who go solely for pleasure, though not unfrequently tempted to do a little business on their own account. In fact, the

temptations are great; and it must be difficult for a young man to withstand them.

We went to the *gallos* about three o'clock. The plaza was crowded, and the ladies in their boxes looked like a parterre of different colored flowers. But whilst the Señoras in their boxes did honor to the fête by their brilliant toilette, the gentlemen promenaded round the circle in jackets, high and low being on the same *curtailed* footing, and certainly in a style of dress more befitting the exhibition. The President and his suite were already there, also several of the foreign ministers.

Meanwhile, the cocks crowed valiantly, bets were adjusted, and even the women entered into the spirit of the scene, taking bets with the gentlemen *sotta voce* in their boxes, upon such and such favorite animal. As a small knife is fastened to the leg of each cock, the battle seldom lasted long, one or other falling every few minutes in a pool of blood. Then there was a clapping of hands, mingled with the loud crowing of some unfortunate cock, who was giving himself airs previous to a combat where he was probably destined to crow his last. It has a curious effect to European eyes, to see young ladies of good family, looking peculiarly feminine and gentle, sanctioning, by their presence, this savage diversion. It is no doubt the effect of early habit, and you will say that at least it is no worse than a bull-fight; which is certain — yet cruel as the latter is, I find something more *en grand*, more noble, in the

> "Ungentle sport that oft invites
> The Spanish maid, and cheers the Spanish swain;"

in the roaring of the "lord of lowing herds" — the galloping of the fine horses, the skill of the riders, the gay dresses, the music and the agile matador; in short, in the whole pomp and circumstance of the combat, than when one looks quietly on to see two birds peck each other's eyes out, and cut each other to pieces. Unlike cock-pits in other countries, attended by blacklegs and pickpockets and gentlemanly roués, by far the largest portion of the assembly in the pit was composed of the first young men in Mexico, and for that matter, of the first old ones also. There was neither confusion, nor noise, nor even loud talking, far less swearing, amongst the lowest of those assembled in the ring; and it is this quiet and orderly behavior which throws over all these incongruities a cloak of decency and decorum, that hides their impropriety so completely, that even foreigners who have lived here a few years, and who were at first struck with astonishment by these things, are now quite reconciled to them.

As far as the company went, it might have been the House of Representatives in Washington; the ladies in the gallery listening to the debates, and the members in the body of the house surrounding Messrs. —— and ——, or any other two vehement orators; applauding their biting remarks and cutting sarcasms, and encouraging them to crow over each other. The President might have been the speaker, and the corps diplomatique represented itself.

We had an agreeable dinner at the E——s, and afterwards accompanied them to the Calvario, a hill where there was a ball *al fresco*, which was rather

amusing, and then paid a visit to the family of General Moran, who has a beautiful house, and gardens in the neighborhood. We found a large party assembled, and amongst them the President. Afterwards, accompanied by the —— minister and the ladies of our party, we went to take a view of the gambling tables, and opened our eyes at the heaps of gold, which changed owners every minute. I saw C——a, a millionaire, win and lose a thousand ounces, apparently with equal indifference. A little advocate, having won two thousand five hundred ounces, wisely ordered his carriage and set off for Mexico, with the best *fee* he had ever received in his life. Ladies do not generally look on at the tables, but may if they please, and especially if they be strangers. Each gambling-room was well fitted up, and looked like a private apartment.

We then returned home and dressed for the ball, which is given in the evening in the plaza de gallos. We first went up stairs to a box, but I afterwards took the advice of M. de —— and came down to see the dancers. There were ladies in full dress, and gentlemen in white jackets — rather inconsistent. The company, though perfectly quiet and well-behaved, were not very select, and were, on that account, particularly amusing. Madame de —— and I walked about, and certainly laughed much more than we should have done in a more distinguished society.

About two in the morning we returned to Mexico, and as I this moment receive a note from the American Minister, informing me that the packet from Vera

Cruz is about to sail, I shall send off my letters now; and should we still be here next year, I shall then give you a more detailed description of the fête, of the ball, both at Calvario and in the cock-pit, and also of the "high life below stairs" gambling, at which the scenes are *impayable*. In one respect, the fashions at San Agustin are altered from what they were a few years ago, when the Señoras used to perform five elaborate and distinct toilettes daily; the first in the morning, the second for the cock-fight, the third for dinner, the fourth for the ball on the hill of Calvary, and the fifth for the ball in the evening. I am told, that as they danced in the open air, on the hill, with all their diamonds and pearls on, in the midst of an immense concourse of people, a great many jewels were constantly lost, which the *léperos* used afterwards to search for, and pick up from the grass; a rich harvest. Though they still dress a great deal, they are contented with changing their toilette twice, or at the most, three times in the course of the day.

Upon the whole, these three days are excessively amusing, and as all ranks and conditions are mingled, one sees much more variety than at a ball in the city.

On their way home, C——n and Señor —— discussed the effects likely to be produced on the morals of the people by this fête. Señor ——, like nearly all the wisest men here, persists in considering gambling an innocent amusement, and declares, that at all events, this fête ought never to be done away with. In his opinion, it conduces to the happiness of the people, gives them an annual pleasure to look forward to, and by the mingling of all ranks which then takes place,

keeps up a good feeling between the higher and lower orders. C——n asked him why, if such were the case, the government did not, at least, endeavor to draw some advantage from it, after the manner of the Count de Revillagigedo — why, as the bank, by the nature of the game, has, besides a great capital, which swallows up all the smaller ones, an immense profit, amounting to twenty-five per cent., they do not make the bankers pay four or five per cent., and charge half a dollar or more to each individual who enters to gamble; with which money they might beautify the village, make a public *paseo*, a good road, a canal to Mexico, &c.

I thought that whatever the government might feel on this subject, neither the bankers nor the gamblers would relish the insinuation. I shall write in a few days by the Baron de —— Minister from ——, who leaves Mexico in a fortnight.

LETTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

Countess C——a — Gutierrez Estrada — Dinner at General Moran's — Dowager Marquesa — Fête at San Antonio — Approach of the rainy season – Diamonds and plate — Great ball — Night travelling — Severe storm — Chapter of accidents — Corpus Christi — Poblana dress — Book club — Ball — Humming bird — Franciscan friar — Missions to Old and New California — Zeal and endurance of the missionaries — Present condition — Convent gardener.

17th June.

As we dine nearly every Sunday with the Countess de la C——a at Tacubaya, where she keeps open house to all her friends, we have had the pleasure of becoming intimately acquainted with her son-in-law, Señor Gutierrez Estrada, who, with his amiable wife, has lately returned from Europe. . . . .

A great dinner was given us the other day by General Moran and his lady, the Marquesa de Vivanco, at San Agustin. We went early, that we might have time to walk about the garden, which is beautiful, and to visit an artificial cave there, which we found lighted up with colored lamps, and where a most fascinating species of cold milk punch with cakes, was served to the company. The dinner would certainly have been superb in any country; the family have travelled a great deal in Europe, (*per force*, the General having been exiled

for several years,) and are amongst the oldest and richest in Mexico. The Dowager Marquesa has a most patriarchal family of daughters and grand-daughters, and of the large party assembled at table, nearly all were composed of its different members. In the evening we had a pleasant dance under the trees.

20th. — Being invited yesterday to a fête at San Antonio, we left Mexico about eight o'clock, by the great causeway leading to San Agustin. The day was peculiarly brilliant, but the rainy season is now announcing its approach by frequent showers towards evening. We found a large party assembled, and about twelve o'clock, sat down to a magnificent breakfast of about sixty persons. Everything was solid silver; even the plates. A vast capital is sunk in diamonds and plate in this country, no good sign of the state of commerce. The ladies in general were dressed in white embroidered muslins, over white or colored satin, and one or two Paris dresses shone conspicuous. There was one specimen of real Mexican beauty; the Señora ——, a face perhaps more Indian than Spanish, very dark, with fine eyes, beautiful teeth, very long, dark hair, and full of expression. The house, which is immensely large, is furnished, or rather unfurnished, in the style of all Mexican haciendas. After breakfast, we had music, dancing, walking and billiard-playing. Some boleros were very gracefully danced by a daughter of the Marquesa's, and they also showed us some dances of the country. The fête terminated with the most beautiful supper I almost ever saw. A great hall was

lighted with colored lamps, the walls entirely lined with green branches, and hung with fresh garlands of flowers most tastefully arranged. There was a great deal of gaiety and cordiality, of magnificence without ceremony, and of riches without pretension.

Although warned by various showers that a bad night would probably set in, and although it was too likely that the hospitality within the house would be extended to our coachmen, and even though the whole party were strongly pressed by the Marquesa to pass the night there, so that it was with difficulty we resisted her entreaties to remain, we did, in the face of all this, set off at twelve o'clock at night to return to Mexico; about seven carriages together, with various gentlemen riding. Though very dark, there was no rain, and we flattered ourselves that it would keep fair till we reached the city. The Minister of the Interior, who is married to a daughter of the Marquesa, C——n and I, and la Güera Rodriguez, set off in one carriage. Some carriages had lamps; others had none. Some had six horses — we had six mules, and an escort of dragoons. We had not gone two miles before a thunder-storm came on; and the black clouds which had been gathering above our heads, burst forth in torrents of rain. The wind was tremendous. All the lamps were extinguished. The horses waded up to their knees in mud and water. Suddenly there was a crash, followed by loud cries. A carriage was overturned, in which were the Señora L—— and a party of gentlemen. In the midst of this awful storm, and perhaps still more bewildered by generous liquor, their coach-

man had lost his way, and lodged them all in a ditch. The poor Señora was dreadfully bruised, her head cut, and her wrist dislocated. In the darkness and confusion she was extricated with difficulty, and placed in another carriage.

Our mules stood still. As far as the noise of the storm would allow us to hear, we made out that our coachman also had lost the road. Two dragoons rode up to direct him. One fell, horse and all, into a deep ditch, where he remained till the next morning. Another carriage came ploughing its way behind us. Another exclamation in the darkness! A mule had fallen and broken his traces, and plunged into the water. The poor animal could not be found. Never was there such a chapter of accidents. We were the only carriage-load which escaped entirely, owing chiefly to the sobriety of the coachman. Very slowly, and after sundry detentions, we arrived in Mexico towards morning, very tired, but with neither broken bones nor bruises.

18*th.*—Day of the Corpus Christi, in which the Host is carried through the city in great procession, at which the President, in full uniform, the Archbishop, and all the ministers, &c., assist. In former days this ceremony took place on Holy Thursday, but finding that, on account of the various ceremonies of the holy week, it could not be kept with due solemnity, another day was set apart for its celebration. We went to a window in the square, to see the procession, which was very brilliant; all the troops out, and the streets crowded. Certainly, a stranger entering Mexico on one of these days,

would be struck with surprise at its apparent wealth. Everything connected with the church is magnificent.

This evening the Señora A—— came after it was dark, in a Poblana dress, which she had just bought to wear at a *Jamaica*, which they are going to have in the country; a sort of fair, where all the girls disguise themselves in peasants' dresses, and go about selling fruit, lemonade, vegetables, &c., to each other; a very ancient Mexican amusement. This dress cost her some hundred dollars. The top of the petticoat is yellow satin; the rest, which is of scarlet cashmere, is embroidered in gold and silver. Her hair was fastened back with a thick silver comb, and her ornaments were very handsome, coral set in gold. Her shoes white satin, embroidered in gold; the sleeves and body of the chemise, which is of the finest cambric, trimmed with rich lace; and the petticoat, which comes below the dress, shows two flounces of Valenciennes. She looks beautiful in this dress, which will not be objected to in the country, though it might not suit a fancy ball in Mexico.

June 27th.—I was awakened this morning by hearing that two boxes had arrived from New York, containing books, letters, &c.; all very acceptable. We also received a number of old newspapers by post, for which we had to pay eighteen dollars! Each sheet costs a real and a half; a mistaken source of profit in a Republic, where the general diffusion of knowledge is of so much importance; for this not only applies to the introduction of French and English, but also of Spanish newspapers. Señors Gu-

tirez Estrada and Cañedo used every effort to reduce this duty on newspapers, but in vain. The post-office opposes its reduction, fearing to be deprived of an imaginary rent; imaginary, because so few persons comparatively, think it worth their while to go to this expense.

There is but one daily newspaper in Mexico, "La Gazeta del Gobierno," (the government paper) and it is filled with orders and decrees. An opposition paper, the "Cosmopolita," is published twice a week; also a Spanish paper, the "Hesperia;" both, (especially the last) are well written. There is also the *Mosquito*, so called, from its stinging sarcasms. Now and then another with a new title appears, like a shooting star, but, from want of support, or from some other motive, is suddenly extinguished.

Enlightened individuals like Don Lucas Alaman and Count Cortina have published newspapers, but not for any length of time. Count Cortina especially, edited a very witty and brilliant paper called the "*Zurriago*," the "Scourge," and another called the "Mono," the "Ape;" and in many of his articles he was tolerably severe upon the incorrect Spanish of his brother editors, of which no one can be a better judge, he having been a member of the "Academia de la Lengua," in Spain.

The only kind of monthly review in Mexico is the "*Mosaico Megicano*," whose editor has made his fortune by his own activity and exertions. Frequently it contains more translations than original matter; but from time to time it publishes scientific articles, said to be written by Don J. M. Bustamante,

which are very valuable, and occasionally a brilliant article from the pen of Count Cortina. General Orbegoso, who is of Spanish origin, is also a contributor. Sometimes, though rarely, it publishes "documentos ineditos," (unedited documents) connected with Mexican antiquities, and Mexican natural history and biography, which are very important; and now and then, it contains a little poetical gem, I know not whether original or not, but exceedingly beautiful. So far as it goes, this review is one great means of spreading knowledge, at least amongst the better classes; but I understand that the editor, Don Ygnacio Cumplido, a very courteous, intelligent man, complains that it does not pay.

There are no circulating libraries in Mexico. Books are at least double the price that they are in Europe. There is no diffusion of useful knowledge amongst the people; neither cheap pamphlets nor cheap magazines written for their amusement or instruction; but this is less owing to want of attention to their interests on the part of many good and enlightened men, than to the unsettled state of the country; for the blight of civil war prevents the best systems from ripening.

Fortunately, there is an English society here, a kind of book-club, who, with their minister, have united in a subscription to order from England all the new publications, and as C——n is a member of this society, we are not so *arrierés* in regard to the literature of the day as might be supposed. Like all English societies, its basis is a good dinner, which each member gives in turn, once a month, after

which there is a sale of the books that have been read, and propositions for new books are given in to the President. It is an excellent plan, and I believe is in part adopted by other foreigners here. But Germans of a certain class do not seem to be sufficiently numerous for such an undertaking, and the French in Mexico, barring some distinguished exceptions, are apt to be amongst the very worst specimens of that people which "le plaisant pays de France" can furnish forth.

We went lately to a ball given by a young Englishman, which was very pretty, and where nearly all the English were collected. Of families, there are not more than half a dozen resident here, the members of whom form a striking contrast in complexion to the *Mexicanas*. With very few exceptions, (and these in the case of English women married to foreigners) they keep themselves entirely aloof from the Mexicans, live quietly in their own houses, into which they have transplanted as much English comfort as possible, rarely travel, and naturally find Mexico the dullest of cities. . . C——n has gone to dine with the English minister, and I am left alone in this large room, with nothing but a humming bird to keep me company; the last of my half dozen. It looks like a large blue fly, and is perfectly tame, but will not live many days. . . . .

I was startled by a solemn voice, saying, "Ave Maria Purissima!" And looking up, there stood in the door-way, a "friar of orders grey," bringing some message to C——n from the head of the convent of San Fernando; with which monks C——n has

formed a great intimacy, chiefly in consequence of the interest which he has taken in the history of their missions to California.

In fact, when we hear the universal outcry that is raised against these communities for the inutility of their lives, it is but just that exceptions should be made in favor of those orders, who, like the monks of San Fernando, have dispersed their missionaries over some of the most miserable parts of the globe, and who, undeterred by danger, and by the prospect of death, have carried light to the most benighted savages. These institutions are of a very remote date. A learned Jesuit monk, Eusebio Kühn, is said to have been the first who discovered that California was a peninsula. In 1683 the Jesuits had formed establishments in Old California, and for the first time it was made known, that the country which had until then been considered an El Dorado, rich in all precious metals and diamonds, was arid, stony, and without water or earth fit for vegetation; that where there is a spring of water, it is to be found amongst the bare rocks, and where there is earth, there is no water. A few spots were found by these industrious men, uniting these advantages, and there they founded their first missions.

But the general hatred with which the Jesuits were regarded, excited suspicion against them, and it was generally supposed that their accounts were false, and that they were privately becoming possessed of much treasure. A *visitador* (surveyor) was sent to examine into the truth, and though he could discover no traces of gold or silver, he was as-

tonished by the industry and zeal with which they had cultivated the barren and treeless waste. In a few years they had built sixteen villages, and when they were expelled in 1767, the Dominican friars of Mexico took their place.

Until these missions were established, and in every part of the peninsula which is not included in the territory of the missions, the savages were the most degraded specimens of humanity existing. More degraded than the beasts of the field, they lay all day upon their faces on the arid sand, basking in the heat; they abhorred all species of clothing, and their only religion was a secret horror that caused them to tremble at the idea of three divinities, belonging to three different tribes, and which divinities were themselves supposed to feel a mortal hatred, and to wage perpetual war against each other.

Undeterred by the miserable condition both of human and of vegetable nature, these missionaries cultivated the ground, established colonies, made important astronomical observations, and devoted themselves to science, to agriculture, and to the amelioration of the condition of these wretched savages.

In New California, the missions were under the charge of thirty-six Franciscan friars, under whom the most extraordinary progress in civilization took place; since in little more than thirty years, upwards of thirty-three thousand Indians were baptized, and eight thousand marriages had taken place. The soil being fertile and the climate more benign than in the other California, in eighteen missions established there, they cultivated corn, wheat, maize, &c., and

introduced vegetables and fruit trees from Spain; amongst these the vine and the olive, from which excellent wine and oil were made, all through that part of the country.

Amongst the monks destined to these distant missions, were those of San Fernando. There, banished from the world, deprived of all the advantages of civilization, they devoted themselves to the task of *taming* the wild Indians; introduced marriage amongst them, taught them to cultivate the ground, together with some of the most simple arts; assisted their wants, reproved their sins, and transplanted the beneficent doctrines of Christianity amongst them; using no arms but the influence which religion and kindness, united with extreme patience, had over their stubborn natures; and making what Humboldt, in speaking of the Jesuit Missions, calls "a pacific conquest" of the country.

Many were the hardships which these poor men endured; changed from place to place; at one time ordered to some barren shore, where it was necessary to recommence their labors, — at another, recalled to the capital by orders of the prelate, in conjunction with the wishes of their brethren, among whom there was a species of congress, called by them a *capitulo*. No increase of rank, no reward, no praise, inspired their labors; their only recompense was their intimate conviction of doing good to their fellow-creatures.

In the archives of the convent there still exist papers, proving the hardships which these men underwent; the zeal with which they applied themselves

to the study of the languages of the country; (and when we are informed that in the space of one hundred and eighty leagues, nineteen different languages are spoken, it was no such easy task) and containing their descriptions of its physical and moral state, more or less well written, according to their different degrees of instruction or talent.

It frequently happened that marketable goods and even provisions had to be sent by sea to those missionaries who lived in the most savage and uncultivated parts of the peninsula; and a curious anecdote on this subject was related to C——n by one of these men who is now a gardener by profession. It happened that some one sent to the monks, amongst other things, a case of fine Malaga raisins; and one of the monks, whose name I forget, sowed a number of the dried seeds. In process of time they sprouted up, became vines, and produced fine grapes, from which the best wine in California was made.

When the independence was declared, and that revolutionary fury, which makes a merit of destroying every establishment, good or bad, which is the work of the opposite party, broke forth; the Mexicans, to prove their hatred to the mother country, destroyed these beneficent institutions; thus committing an error as fatal in its results as when in 1828 they expelled so many rich proprietors, who were followed into exile by their numerous families and by their old servants, who gave them in these times of trouble, proofs of attachment and fidelity belonging to a race now scarcely existing here, except amongst a few of the oldest families.

The result has been, that the frontiers, being now unprotected by the military garrisons or *presidios*, which were established there, and deserted by the missionaries, the Indians are no longer kept under subjection, either by the force of arms or by the good counsels and persuasive influence of their padres. The Mexican territory is in consequence perpetually exposed to their invasions — whole families are massacred by the savages, who exchange guns for rifles, which they already know how to use, and these evil consequences are occasionally and imperfectly averted at a great expense to the republic. Bustamante has indeed been making an investigation lately as to the funds and general condition of these establishments, with the intention of reëstablishing some similar institutions; but as yet I believe that nothing decisive has been done in this respect. . . . .

Near the convent there is a beautiful garden, where we sometimes walk in the morning, cultivated by an old monk, who, after spending a laborious life in these distant missions, is now enjoying a contented old age among his plants and flowers. Perhaps you are tired of my *prosing*, (caused by the apparition of the old lay-brother) and would prefer some account of him in verse.

An aged monk in San Fernando dwells,
An innocent and venerable man ;
His earlier days were spent within its cells,
And end obscurely as they first began.

Manhood's career in savage climes he ran,
On lonely California's Indian shore —
Dispelling superstition's deadly ban,
Or teaching (what could patriot do more ?)
Those rudiments of peace, the gardener's humble store.

Oft have I marked him, silent and apart,
Loitering near the sunny convent-gate,
Rewarded by tranquillity of heart
For toils so worthy of the truly great ;
And in my soul admired, compared his state
With that of some rude brawler, whose crude mind
Some wondrous change on earth would fain create ;
Who after flatt'ring, harassing mankind,
Gains titles, riches, pomp, with shame and scorn combined.

LETTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

The President — Yturbide — Visit from the Archbishop — Señor Cañedo — General Almonte — Señor Cuevas — Situation of an Archbishop in Mexico — Of Señor Posada — His life — Mexican charity — Wax figures — Anecdote — Valuable present — Education — Comparison — Schools — Opportunities — Natural talent — Annual — Compliments to the Mexican ladies by the Editor — Families of the old school — Morals — Indulgence — Manners — Love of country — Colleges.

5th July.

Yesterday morning, we had a visit from the President, with two of his officers. He was riding one of the handsomest black horses I ever saw. On going out we stopped to look at a wax figure of Yturbide on horseback, which he considers a good resemblance, and which was sent me in a present some time ago. He ought to be a good judge, as he was a most devoted friend of the unfortunate Agustin the First, who, whatever were his faults, seems to have inspired his friends with the most devoted and enthusiastic attachment. In the prime of life, brave and active, handsome and fond of show, he had all the qualities which render a chief popular with the multitude; "but popularity, when not based upon great benefits, is transient; it is founded upon a principle of egotism, because a whole people cannot have personal sympathies." Ambition led him to desert

the royal cause which he had served for nine years; and vanity blinded him to the dangers that surrounded him in the midst of his triumphs, even when proclaimed Emperor by the united voice of the garrison and city of Mexico — when his horses were taken from his carriage, and when amidst the shouts of the multitude, his coach was dragged in triumph to the palace. His great error, according to those who talk of him impartially, was indecision in the most critical emergencies, and his permitting himself to be governed by circumstances, instead of directing these circumstances as they occurred.

I could not help thinking, as the General stood there looking at the waxen image of his friend, what a stormy life he himself has passed; how little real tranquillity he can ever have enjoyed; and wondering whether he will be permitted to finish his presidential days in peace, which according to rumor is doubtful.

8th. — I had the honor of a long visit this morning from his Grace the Archbishop. He came about eleven o'clock, after mass, and remained till dinner time, sitting out all our Sunday visiters, who are generally numerous, as it is the only day of rest for employés, and especially for the Cabinet. Amongst our visiters were Señor Cañedo, who is extremely agreeable in conversation, and as an orator famed for his sarcasm and cutting wit. He has been particularly kind and friendly to us, ever since our arrival — General Almonte, Minister of War, a handsome man and pleasant, and an officer of great bravery — very unpopular with one party and especially dis-

liked by the English, but also a great friend of ours. Señor Cuevas, Minister of the Interior, married to a daughter of the Marquesa de Vivanco, an amiable and excellent man, who seems generally liked, and is also most friendly to us. All these gentlemen are praised or abused, according to the party of the person who speaks of them; but I, not interfering in Mexican politics, find them amongst the most pleasant of our acquaintances.

However, were I to choose a situation here, it would undoubtedly be that of Archbishop of Mexico, the most enviable in the world to those who would enjoy a life of tranquillity, ease, and universal adoration. He is a Pope without the trouble, or a tenth part of the responsibility. He is venerated more than the Holy Father is in enlightened Rome, and like kings in the good old times, can do no wrong. His salary amounts to about one hundred thousand dollars, and a revenue might be made by the sweetmeats alone which are sent him from all the nuns in the republic. His palace in town, his well-cushioned carriage, well-conditioned horses and sleek mules, seem the very perfection of comfort. In fact, *comfort*, which is unknown amongst the profane of Mexico, has taken refuge with the Archbishop; and though many drops of it are shed on the shaven heads of all bishops, curates, confessors and friars, still in his illustrious person it concentrates, as in a focus. He himself is a benevolent, good-hearted, good-natured, portly and jovial personage, with the most laissez-aller air and expression conceivable. He looks like one on whom the good things of this world

have fallen in a constant and benignant shower, which shower hath fallen on a rich and fertile soil. He is generally to be seen leaning back in his carriage, dressed in purple, with amethyst cross, and giving his benediction to the people as he passes. He seems engaged in a pleasant reverie, and his countenance wears an air of the most placid and insouciant content. He enjoys a good dinner, good wine, and ladies' society, but just sufficiently to make his leisure hours pass pleasantly, without indigestion from the first, headaches from the second, or heartaches from the third. So does his life seem to pass on like a deep untroubled stream, on whose margin grow sweet flowers, on whose clear waters the bending trees are reflected, but on whose placid face no lasting impression is made.

I have no doubt that his charities are in proportion to his large fortune; and when I say that I have no doubt of this, it is because I firmly believe there exists no country in the world where charities, both public and private, are practised on so noble a scale, especially by the women, under the direction of the priests. I am inclined to believe that, generally speaking, charity is a distinguishing attribute of a Catholic country.

The Archbishop is said to be a man of good information, and was at one time a Senator. In 1833, being comprehended in the law of banishment, caused by the political disturbances which have never ceased to afflict this country since the independence, he passed some time in the United States, chiefly in New Orleans, but this, I believe, is the only cloud

that has darkened his horizon, or disturbed the tranquil current of his life. His consecration, with its attendant fatigues, must have been to him a wearisome overture to a pleasant drama, a hard stepping-stone to glory. As to the rest, he is very unostentatious; and his conversation is far from austere. On the contrary, he is one of the best-tempered and most cheerful old men in society that it is possible to meet with. . . .

I send you, by the Mexican Commissioners, who are kind enough to take charge of a box for me, the figure of a Mexican *tortillera*, by which you may judge a little of the perfection in which the commonest *lépero* here works in wax. The incredible patience which enabled the ancient Mexicans to work their statues in wood or stone with the rudest instruments, has descended to their posterity, as well as their extraordinary and truly Chinese talent for imitation. With a common knife and a piece of hard wood, an uneducated man will produce a fine piece of sculpture. There is no imagination. They do not leave the beaten track, but continue on the models which the Spanish conquerors brought out with them, some of which, however, were very beautiful.

In wax, especially, their figures have been brought to great perfection. Everything that surrounds them, they can imitate, and their wax portraits are sometimes little gems of art; but in this last branch, which belongs to a higher order of art, there are no good workmen at present.

Apropos to which, a poor artist brought some tolerable wax portraits here for sale the other day, and

amongst others, that of a celebrated general. C——n remarked that it was fairer than the original, as far as he recollected. "Ah!" said the man, "but when his Excellency *washes his face*, nothing can be more exact." A valuable present was sent lately, by a gentleman here, to the Count de —— in Spain; twelve cases, each case containing twelve wax figures; each figure representing some Mexican trade, or profession or employment. There were men drawing the pulque from the maguey, Indian women selling vegetables, tortilleras, venders of ducks, fruitmen, lard-sellers, the postman of Guachinango, loaded with parrots, monkeys, &c.,—more of everything than of letters — the Poblana peasant, the rancherita on horseback before her farm-servant, the gaily-dressed ranchero, in short, a little history of Mexico in wax. . . .

You ask me, how Mexican women are educated. In answering you, I must put aside a few brilliant exceptions, and speak *en masse*, the most difficult thing in the world, for these exceptions are always rising up before me like accusing angels, and I begin to think of individuals, when I should keep to generalities. Generally speaking, then, the Mexican Señoras and Señoritas write, read and play a little, sew, and take care of their houses and children. When I say they read, I mean they know how to read; when I say they write, I do not mean that they can always spell; and when I say they play, I do not assert that they have generally a knowledge of music. If we compare their education with that of girls in England, or in the United States, it is not a compar-

ison, but a contrast. Compare it with that of Spanish women, and we shall be less severe upon their *farniente* descendants. In the first place, the climate inclines every one to indolence, both physically and morally. One cannot pore over a book when the blue sky is constantly smiling in at the open windows; then out of doors after ten o'clock, the sun gives us due warning of our tropical latitude, and even though the breeze is so fresh and pleasant, one has no inclination to walk or ride far. Whatever be the cause, I am convinced that it is impossible to take the same exercise with the mind or with the body in this country, as in Europe or in the Northern states. Then as to schools, there are none that can deserve the name, and no governesses. Young girls can have no emulation, for they never meet. They have no public diversion, and no private amusement. There are a few good foreign masters, most of whom have come to Mexico for the purpose of making their fortune, by teaching, or marriage, or both, and whose object, naturally, is to make the most money in the shortest possible time, that they may return home and enjoy it. The children generally appear to have an extraordinary disposition for music and drawing, yet there are few girls who are proficients in either.

When very young, they occasionally attend the schools, where boys and girls learn to read in common, or any other accomplishment that the old women can teach them; but at twelve they are already considered too old to attend these promiscuous assemblages, and masters are got in for drawing and music, to finish their education. I asked a lady

the other day if her daughter went to school. "Good heavens!" said she, quite shocked, "she is past eleven years old!" It frequently happens that the least well-informed girls are the children of the cleverest men, who, keeping to the customs of their forefathers, are content if they confess regularly, attend church constantly, and can embroider and sing a little. Where there are more extended ideas, it is chiefly amongst families who have travelled in Europe, and have seen the different education of women in foreign countries. Of these, the fathers occasionally devote a short portion of their time to the instruction of their daughters, perhaps during their leisure evening moments, but it may easily be supposed that this desultory system has little real influence on the minds of the children. I do not think there are above half a dozen married women, or as many girls above fourteen, who, with the exception of the mass-book, read any one book through in the whole course of the year. They thus greatly simplify the system of education in the United States, where parties are frequently divided between the advocates for solid learning and those for superficial accomplishments; and according to whom it is difficult to amalgamate the solid beef of science with the sweet sauce of les beaux arts.

But if a Mexican girl is ignorant she rarely shows it. They have generally the greatest possible tact; never by any chance wandering out of their depth, or betraying by word or sign that they are not well informed on the subject under discussion. Though seldom graceful, they are never awkward, and always

self-possessed. They have plenty of natural talent, and where it has been thoroughly cultivated, no women can surpass them. Of what is called literary society, there is of course none —

"No bustling Botherbys have they to shew 'em
That charming passage in the last new poem."

There is a little annual lying beside me, called "*Calendario de las Señoritas Mejicanas*," of which the preface, by Galvan, the editor, is very amusing.

"To none," he says, "better than to Mexican ladies, can I dedicate this mark of attention — (*obsequio.*) Their graceful attractions well deserve any trouble that may have been taken to please them. Their bodies are graceful as the palms of the desert; their hair, black as ebony, or golden as the rays of the sun, gracefully waves over their delicate shoulders; their glances are like the peaceful light of the moon. The Mexican ladies are not so white as the Europeans, but their whiteness is more agreeable to our eyes. Their words are soft, leading our hearts by gentleness, in the same manner as in their moments of just indignation they appal and confound us. Who can resist the magic of their song, always sweet, always gentle, and always natural? Let us leave to foreign ladies (*las ultramarinas*) these affected and scientific manners of singing; here nature surpasses art, as happens in everything, notwithstanding the cavilings of the learned.

"And what shall I say of their souls? I shall say that in Europe the minds are more cultivated, but in Mexico the hearts are more amiable. Here they are

not only sentimental, but tender; not only soft, but virtuous; the body of a child is not more sensitive, (*no es mas sensible el cuerpo de un niño*) nor a rose-bud softer. I have seen souls as beautiful as the borders of the rainbow, and purer than the drops of dew. Their passions are seldom tempestuous, and even then they are kindled and extinguished easily; but generally they emit a peaceful light, like the morning star, Venus. Modesty is painted in their eyes, and modesty is the greatest and most irresistible fascination of their souls. In short, the Mexican ladies, by their manifold virtues, are destined to serve as our support whilst we travel through the sad desert of life.

"Well do these attractions merit that we should try to please them; and in effect a new form, new lustre, and new graces have been given to the 'Almanac of the Mexican Ladies,' whom the editor submissively entreats to receive with benevolence this small tribute due to their enchantments and their virtues!"

There are in Mexico a few families of the old school, people of high rank, but who mingle very little in society; who are little known to the generality of foreigners, and who keep their daughters entirely at home, that they may not be contaminated by bad example. These select few, rich without any ostentation, are certainly doing everything that is in their power to remedy the evils occasioned by the want of proper schools, or of competent instructresses for their daughters. Being nearly all allied by birth, or connected by marriage, they form a sort

of *clan;* and it is sufficient to belong to one or other of these families, to be hospitably received by all. They meet together frequently, without ceremony, and whatever elements of good exist in Mexico, are to be found amongst them. The fathers are generally men of talent and learning, and the mothers, women of the highest respectability, to whose name no suspicion can be attached.

But indeed, it is long before a stranger even suspects the state of morals in this country, for whatever be the private conduct of individuals, the most perfect decorum prevails in outward behavior. But indolence is the mother of vice, and not only to little children might Doctor Watts have asserted that,

> "Satan finds some mischief still,
> For idle hands to do."

They are besides extremely *leal* to each other, and with proper *esprit de corps*, rarely gossip to strangers concerning the errors of their neighbors' ways; — indeed, if such a thing is hinted at, deny all knowledge of the fact. So long as outward decency is preserved, habit has rendered them tolerably indifferent as to the liaisons subsisting amongst their particular friends; and as long as a woman attends church regularly, is a patroness of charitable institutions, and gives no scandal by her outward behavior, she may do pretty much as she pleases. As for flirtations in public, they are unknown.

I must, however, confess that this indulgence on the part of women of unimpeachable reputation is sometimes carried too far. We went lately to a

breakfast, at which was a young and beautiful Countess, lately married, and of very low birth. She looked very splendid, with all the —— diamonds, and a dress of rose-colored satin. After breakfast, we adjourned to another room, where I admired the beauty of a little child who was playing about on the floor, when this lady said, "Yes, she is very pretty — very like my little girl, who is just the same age." I was rather surprised, but concluded she had been a widow, and made the inquiry of an old French lady who was sitting near me. "Oh no!" said she — "she was never married before; she alludes to the children she had before the Count became acquainted with her!" And yet, the Señora de ——, the strictest woman in Mexico, was loading her with attentions and caresses. I must say, however, that this was a singular instance. . . .

There are no women more affectionate in their manners than those of Mexico. In fact, a foreigner, especially if he be an Englishman and a shy man, and accustomed to the coldness of his fair countrywomen, need only live a few years here, and understand the language, and become accustomed to the peculiar style of beauty, to find the Mexican Señoritas perfectly irresistible.

And that this is so, may be judged of by the many instances of Englishmen married to the women of this country, who *invariably* make them excellent wives. But when an Englishman marries here, he ought to settle here, for it is very rare that a *Mexicaine* can live out of her own country. They miss the climate — they miss that warmth of manner, that

universal cordiality by which they are surrounded here. They miss the *laissez-aller* and absence of all etiquette in habits, toilette, &c. They find themselves surrounded by women so differently educated, as to be doubly strangers to them, strangers in feeling as well as in country. A very few instances there are, of girls married very young, taken to Europe, and introduced into good society, who have acquired European ways of thinking, and even prefer other countries to their own; but this is so rare, as scarcely to form an exception. They are true patriots, and the visible horizon bounds their wishes. In England especially, they are completely out of their element. A language nearly impossible for them to acquire, a religion which they consider heretical, outward coldness covering inward warmth, a perpetual war between sun and fog, etiquette carried to excess, an insupportable stiffness and order in the article of the toilette; rebosos unknown, *cigaritos* considered barbarous. . . . They feel like exiles from paradise, and live but in hopes of a speedy return.

As to the colleges for young men, although various projects of reform have been made by enlightened men in regard to them, especially by Don Lucas Alaman, and afterwards by Señor Gutirez Estrada, and though to a certain extent, many of these plans were carried into effect, it is a universal source of complaint among the most distinguished persons in Mexico, that in order to give their sons a thorough education, it is necessary to send them abroad.

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LETTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

Revolution in Mexico — Gomez Farias and General Urrea — The Federalists — The President imprisoned — Firing — Cannon — First news — Escape — Proclamation of the Government — Cannonading — Count C——a — Houses deserted — Countess del V——e — Proclamation of the Federalists — Circular of the Federalists — Scarcity of provisions — Bursting of a shell — Refugees — Dr. Plan — Young Lady shot — Gomez Farias — Rumors — Address of Gomez Farias — Balls and Bullets — Visit from the —— Minister — Arrival of Monsieur de —— — Expected attack — Skirmish — Appearance of the street — San Cosmé — General —— — The Count de B —— — More rumors — Suspense — Cannonading — Government bulletin — Plan of the rebels defeated — Proclamation of the President — Of General Valencia — Maternal affection — Fresh reports — Families leaving the city — Letter from Santa Anna — Bustamante's letter when imprisoned — Propositions — Refusal — Tacubaya — Archbishop — Fresh proposals — Refusal — Second letter from Santa Anna — Government bulletin — Proclamations — An awkward mistake — The Archbishop visits the President — Conclusion of the Revolution — Government newspaper — Circulars.

July 15th.

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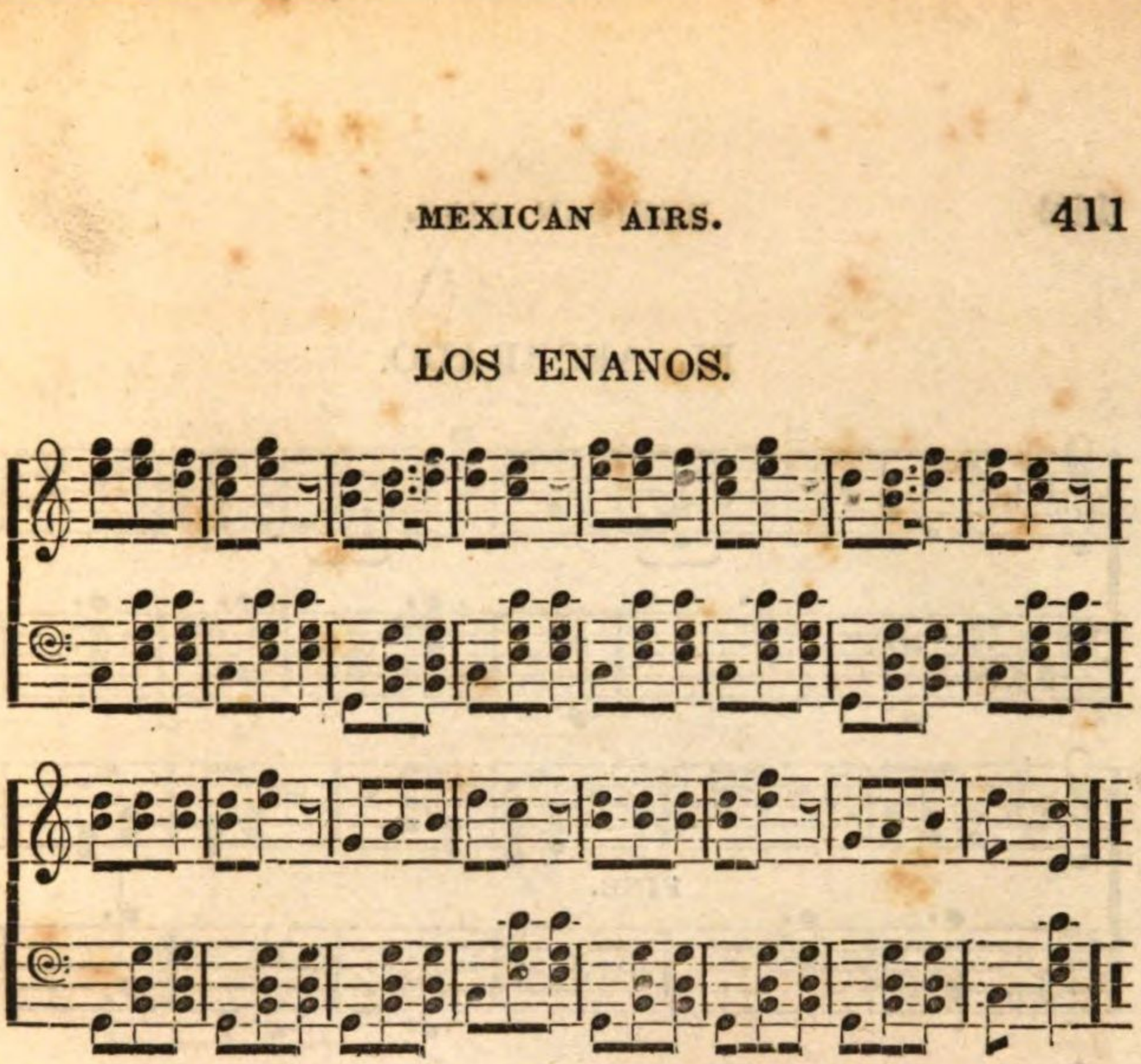
LOS ENANOS.



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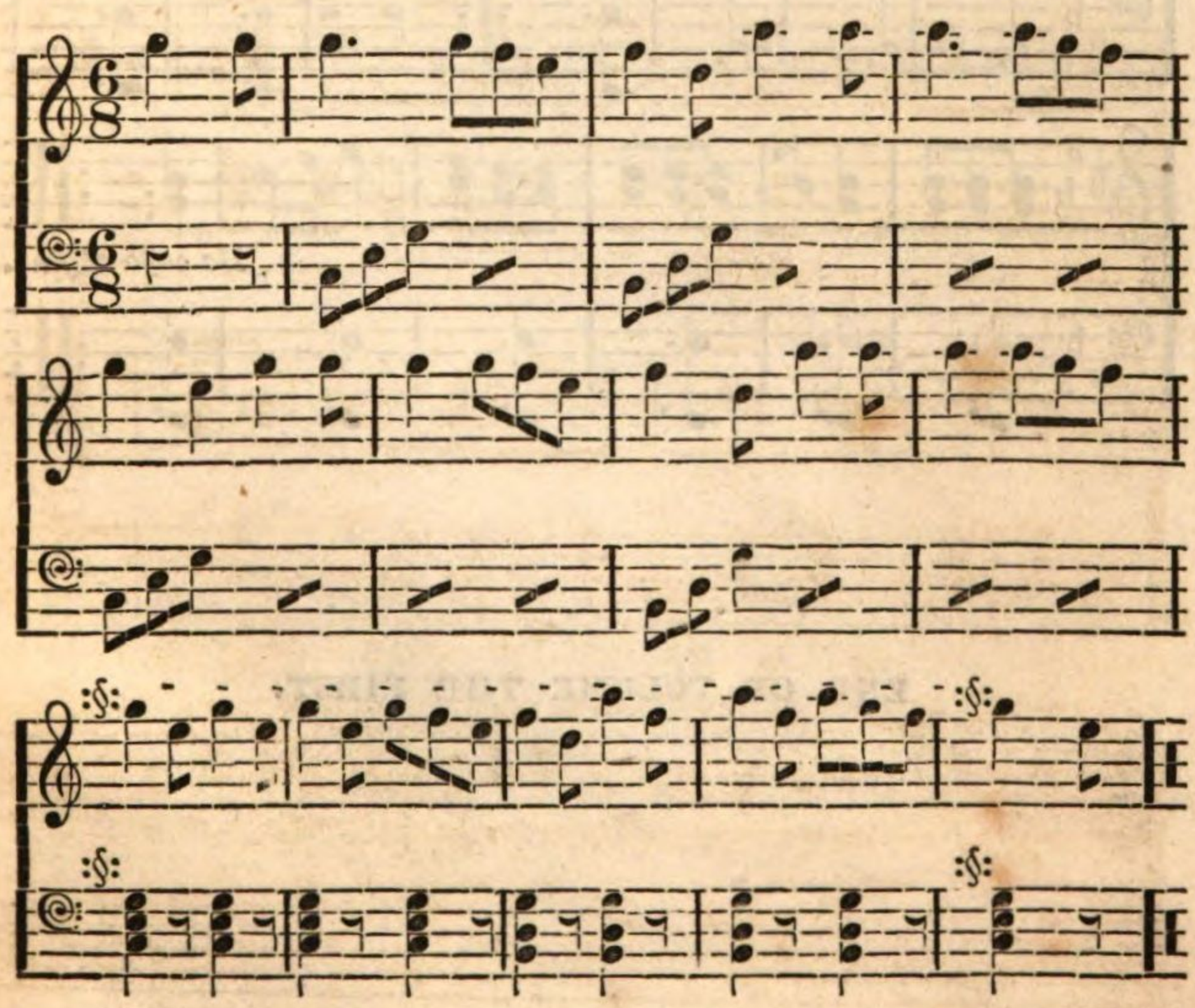

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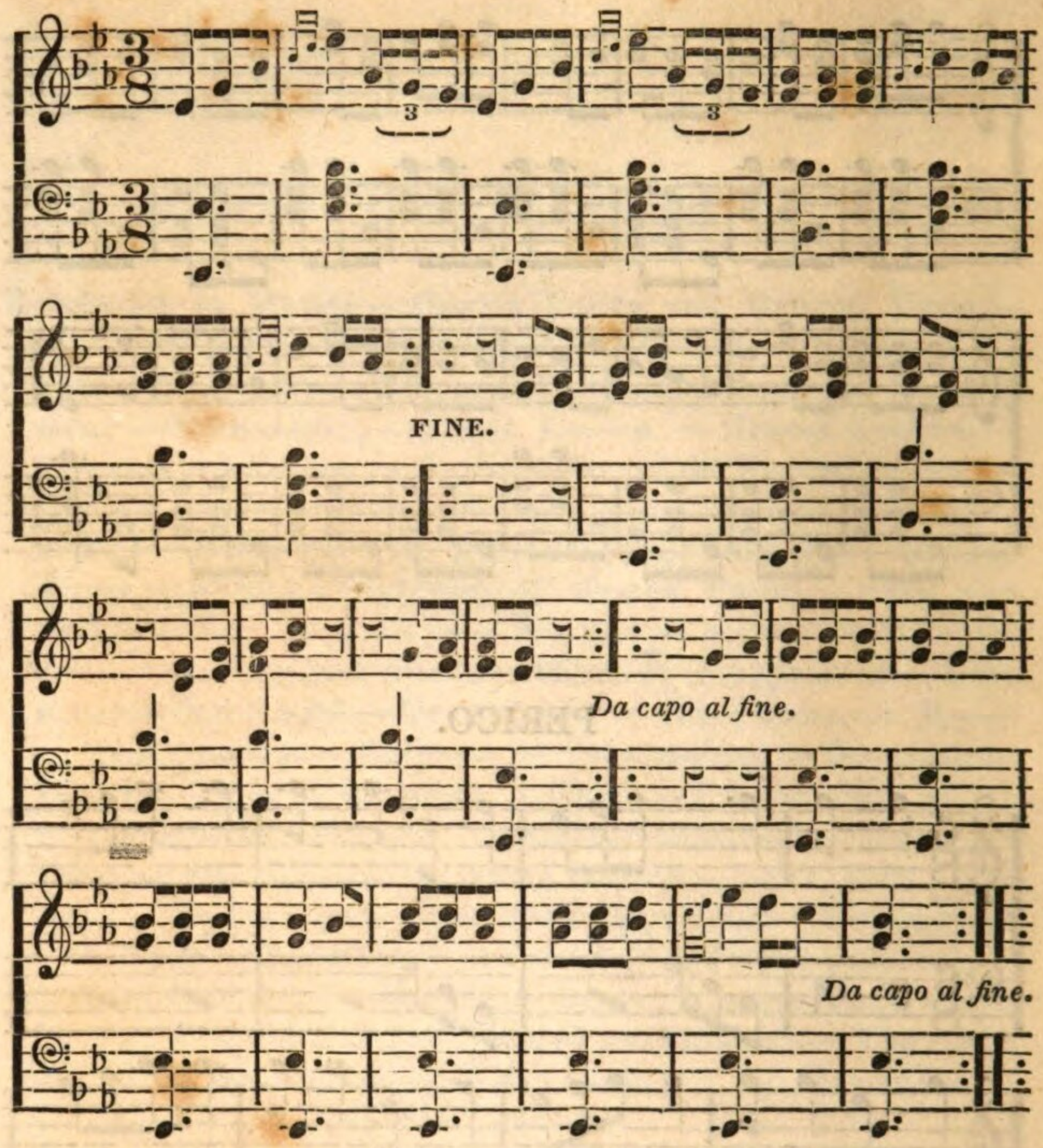

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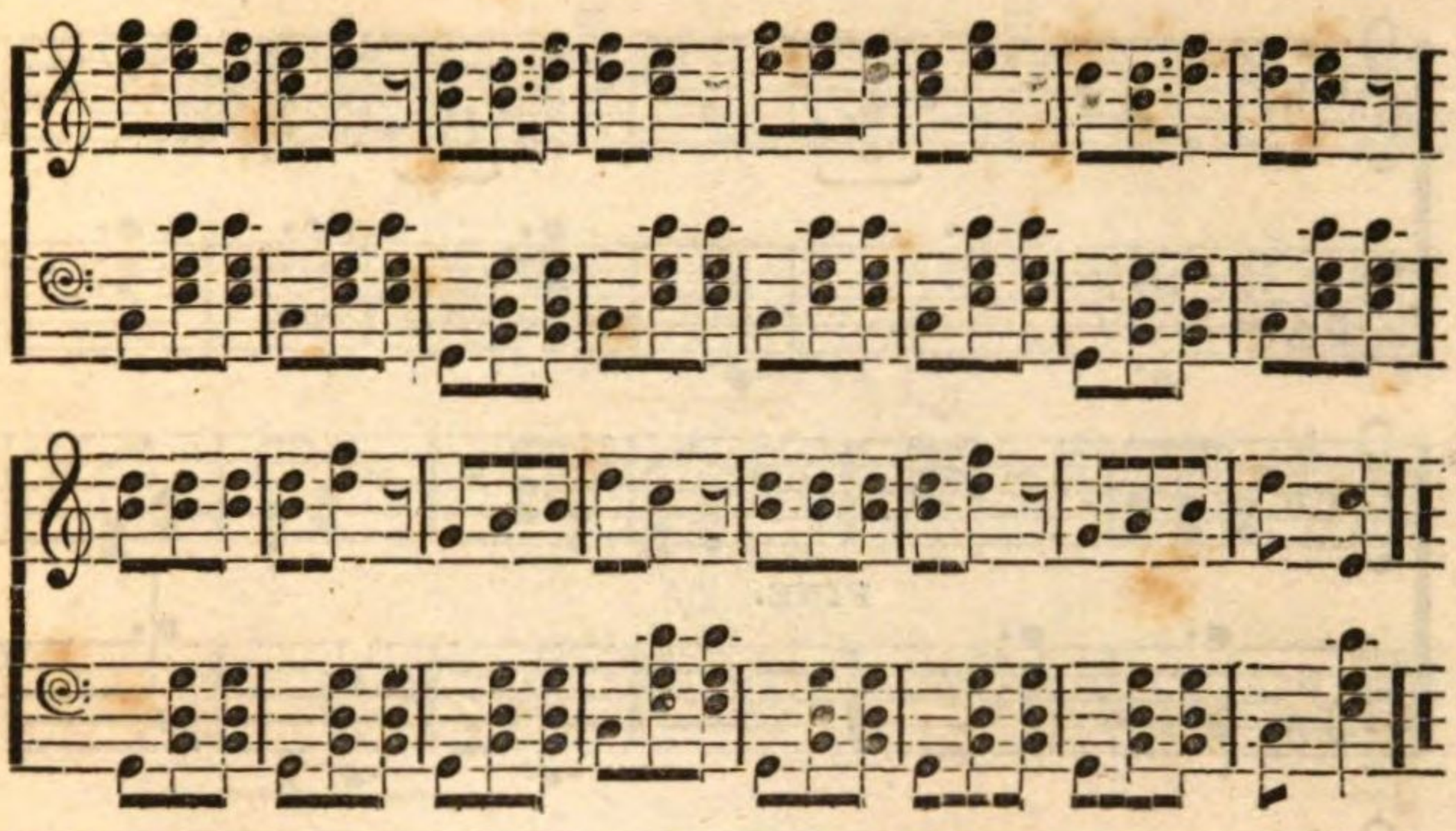

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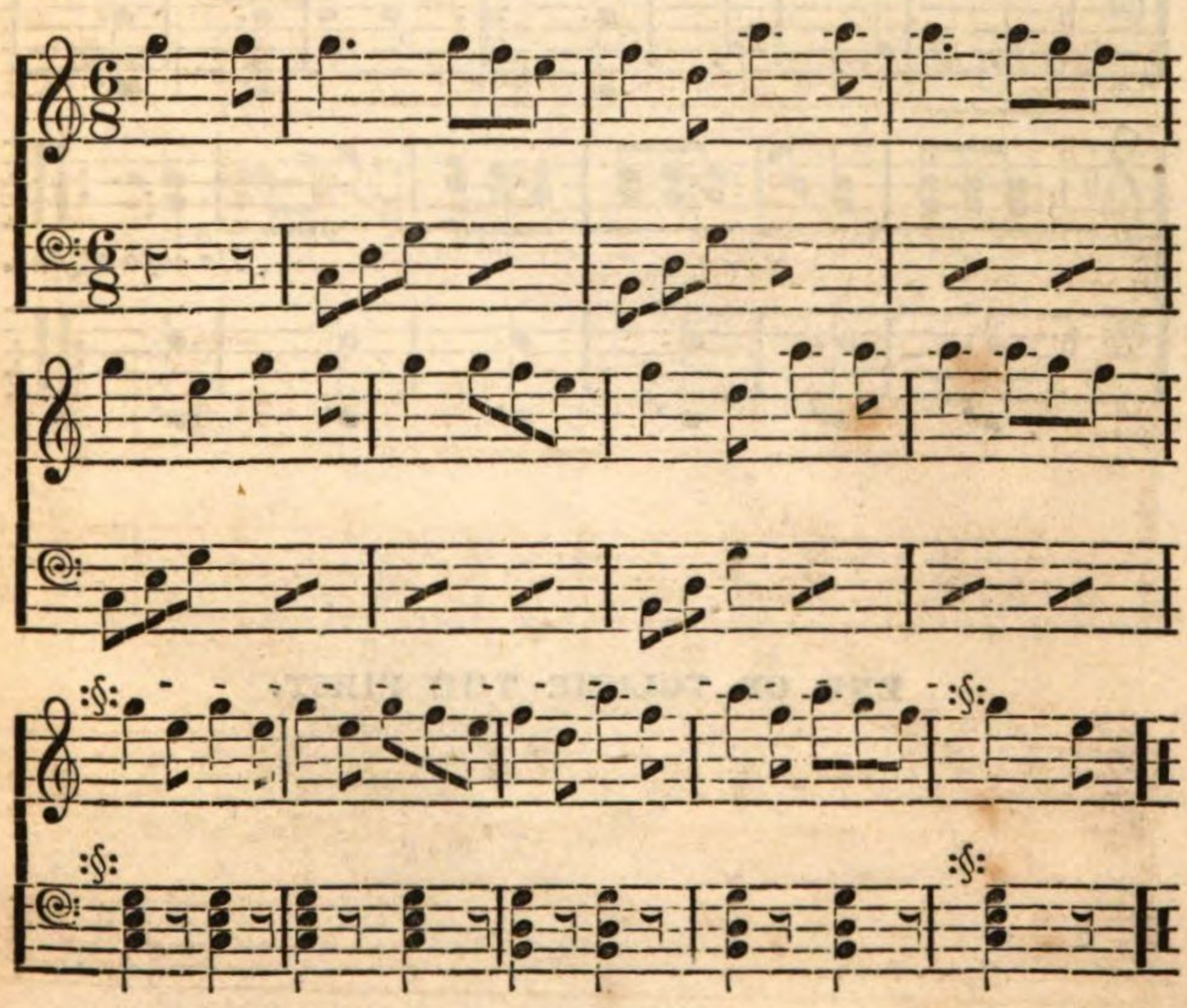

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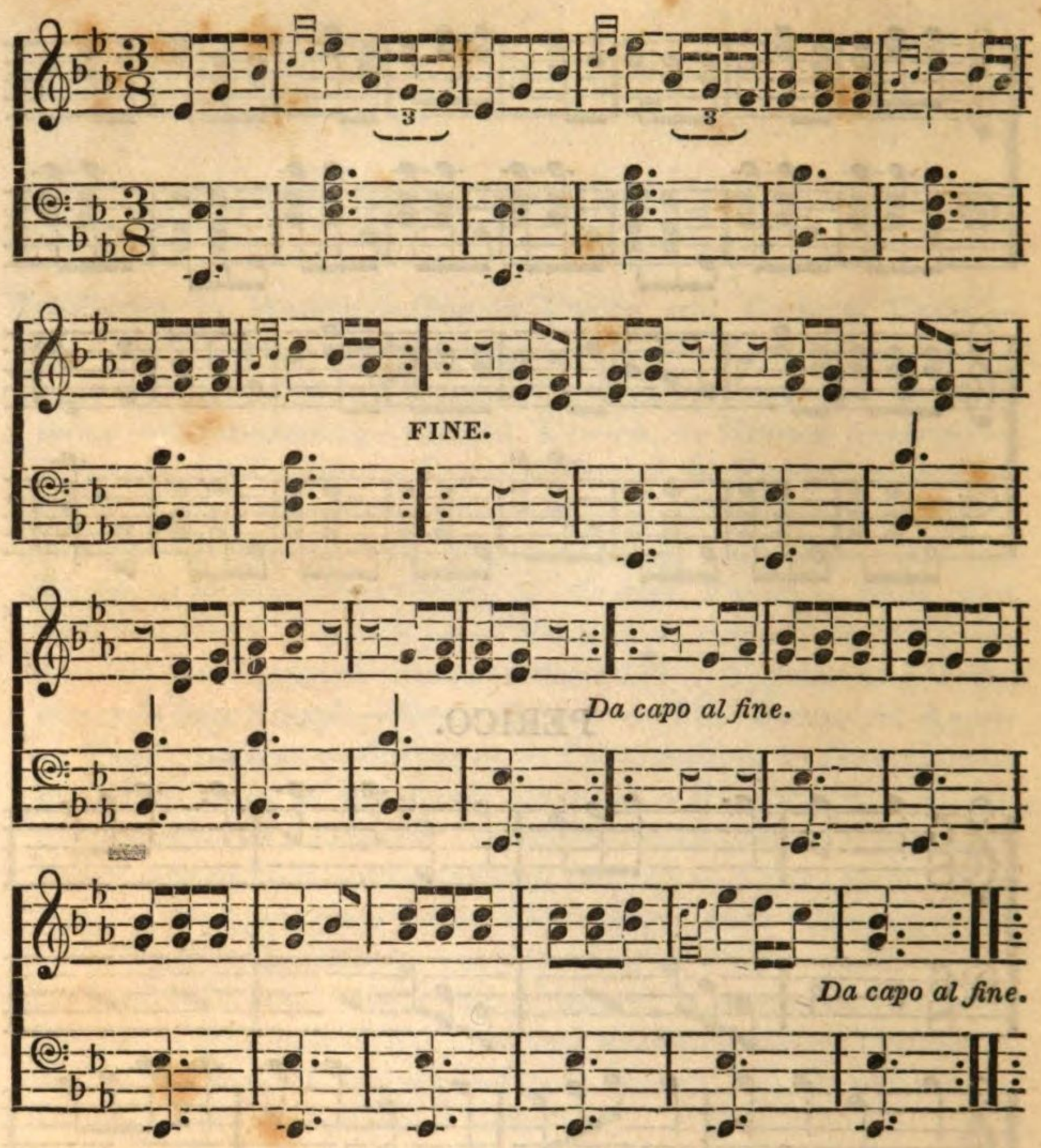

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